



# RAYMOND'S RIDE

BY  
NAT GOULD



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A Journal  
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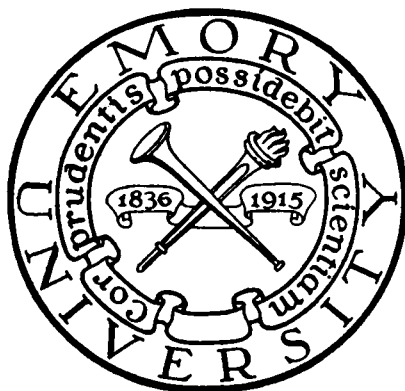
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BY

NAT GOULD

AUTHOR OF "A RACECOURSE TRAGEDY," "KING OF THE RANGES,"  
"THE THREE WAGERS," ETC.

LONDON

R. A. EVERETT & CO., LTD.

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# RAYMOND'S RIDE

## CHAPTER I

### "A RAYMOND'S RIDE"

OLD Daniel Cotswold walked with the slow, hesitating steps of age down the moss-grown, weed-covered avenue leading to the front entrance of The Folly.

Raymond's Folly was the real name of this neglected country residence. At the time it was built it was considered a mansion, but things have changed since then, and the world is now in a rapid whirl, and the vast majority of people are carried along by it.

In the early history of Raymond's Folly there is much of interest, and old Dan Cotswold is well up in everything connected with the family. More about them anon; at present we are concerned with Dan and his thoughts. Like many people who live lonely lives, he had a habit of talking to himself, and this kept him from being taciturn and morose. As a matter of fact, he was of a cheerful disposition, which his sombre surroundings did not suppress.

On this particular morning he was aware that something was about to happen that would probably

interfere with the even tenor of his ways. Dan had been the sole occupant of The Folly for many years, and as it was a large house, and the grounds extensive, it was small wonder the place looked like a wilderness. Dan himself was quite in keeping with his surroundings. His pay was uncertain, and the small amount allowed for expenses was totally inadequate to the requirements. Who sent the sums he from time to time received he did not know, but the envelopes always bore the London stamp; they contained no writing—merely postal orders—but this troubled him not, for the Raymonds were a peculiar family, and seldom acted like ordinary mortals. He accepted the money, and was thankful when it came; his wants were few, and he never grumbled at the scantiness of his allowance. He lived chiefly on what the garden produced, and his poultry supplied him with more fresh eggs than he knew how to get rid of. A happy, contented old man, out of touch with the world, buried in a large, neglected house, full of furniture that was never used, than which there is no more desolate place to dwell in.

Dan made slow progress up the drive; the moss was slippery, and he had to be careful. His clothes were as neglected as his surroundings. From the old weather-stained cap on his head to the mended and patched hob-nailed boots on his feet, he had not an article of attire that would have been picked up by a tramp. Yet he was a cleanly man in himself, but never gave a thought to his clothes, except when a rent or a tear demanded immediate attention.

“There’s something going to happen,” muttered

Dan. "I heard it again last night; it knocked at my door. I'm not afraid of ghosts, leastwise of a Raymond's spirit, but it's uncanny. I wonder what it means? Perhaps Mr. Ralph's coming back. He was the last to quit, and he told me he'd never return to the old place until he had made money enough to put it in order and keep it up again."

Dan looked round and smiled at the wilderness, saying half aloud :

"He'll have to make a good big sum to do that. I wonder where he went to? They do say, them as ought to know, that it was Mexico. A wild country, I reckon. I hope he's come to no harm. Not much fear of that with a Raymond; they are more likely to do harm to other folks. There's been some strange doings at The Folly in my time, among men and horses; ay, and women too. There's Miss Rosalind. I wonder where she is? Must be a beautiful woman now, and some men will lose their hearts and their money over her."

Dan reached the steps leading to the terrace, and picking up a scraper, he slowly commenced to tear off the moss, and remove various weeds which filled up the cracks.

"I'll just clean up a bit in case we have visitors," he said, smiling.

He quickly tired of his work, and leaving it half done, went round to the stables. Here was the same scene of desolation; the doors of the boxes stood half open, the glass in the windows was covered with spiders' webs, and a vast accumulation of dirt and dust. The yard was overgrown with rank grass, and



Dan's poultry had taken possession of a spacious coach-house, that had once been occupied by some of the smartest turn-outs in the county.

"Haunted they say these stables are, as well as the house," said Dan; "but I've never heard any noises here at night. That's the box in which Mr. Ralph's father shot his horse and himself after losing a heap of money over a match. That was a bad night for all of us ; no wonder Mr. Ralph went away when he found out there was nothing to keep the place up on."

Pottering about as usual, Dan came round to the back of the house, and entered the kitchen. The fire was still burning, and he threw some more wood on ; then he made his tea, and prepared to retire as soon as it was dark. He slept in a small closet, which was entered from the kitchen. Nothing had happened during the day, and Dan wondered if he would hear the mysterious sounds again. The thought of them did not cause him uneasiness, although many a man would have dreaded sleeping alone in The Folly.

Towards morning he was roused by sounds coming from the direction of the stables. He listened, and distinctly heard the faint neighing of a horse, and the clang of hoofs.

"Somebody's turned up," thought Dan. "I'll get up and have a look through the window."

He had a good view of the stables from the kitchen window. There was only a faint light, and at first he saw nothing, but after a few moments he started back with an exclamation of alarm.

"My God! it's Mr. Richard and his horse," he muttered in a hollow voice.

Tremblingly he advanced to the window again and peered out. He was not mistaken; he never felt more certain of anything in his life. It was Richard Raymond and his horse, and yet Dan had seen them lying dead in the self-same box years ago. The man, or spirit, or whatever it was, looked carefully round, and Dan saw his face, which was pale and livid. The horse, a weird, spectral-looking animal, did not move until the rider had mounted, but no sooner was he in the saddle than it sprang forward and disappeared.

Dan was no believer in ghosts, so he said, but as he heard no sound when the horse galloped away, he shivered, and felt decidedly uncomfortable. He did not return to his bed, and no sooner had daylight made a welcome appearance than he went into the yard, and across to the stable box.

Cautiously peering inside, he saw no signs of its having been recently tenanted. He turned over the old dusty straw and examined it carefully; he had done so many times before, when searching for eggs laid there by straying hens. He sat down and glanced from side to side, wondering what this strange sight he had witnessed meant. Following as it did the knocking upon his closet door, he was the more inclined to attach importance to it, and fancied the two incidents were in some mysterious way connected.

Shaking his head in token of defeat, he rose to his feet and shuffled towards the door. As he kicked

up the straw he saw something glittering on the ground, and picking it up, found it was a diamond ring with a large and valuable single stone. Dan had but a faint idea of the value of diamonds or jewellery, but he knew the ring he held in his hand was not a common one. As he twisted it about, and the beautiful stone sparkled and scintillated, Dan's memory recalled like a flash that he had seen such a ring many times on Richard Raymond's hand. His eyesight was not particularly good, but he saw initials on the inside, and made out two R's. This more than ever convinced him that what he had seen the previous night was either Richard Raymond's ghost, or that someone bearing an extraordinary likeness to him had visited The Folly during the night. Ghosts, Dan imagined, did not wear diamond rings. The "R. R." might stand for Ralph Raymond; but if so, why should he have returned in such a manner to his home, after all these years?

"There was no sound when the horse galloped away," said Dan to himself. "If I go down to the village and tell anyone, I shall only be laughed at for an old fool."

He entered the house again, and pulling up a blind whose cords had not yet given way, let a flood of sunlight into the large, dust-strewn room. There was another surprise in store for Dan. He saw that some of the chairs had been moved, and that an old panel cupboard in the wall had evidently been opened and closed again. Dan had never attempted to open this cupboard; he had no curiosity to do so, nor was it any business of his; and unlike many other people

who ought to know better, he always minded his own business, and did not meddle with that of others. He tried the door, but it did not slide back, so he left it, and puzzled his head as to how it had been opened. Who had been into the room? Clearly this was his business to find out. He roamed through every room in the house, but found no sign of entry in any of them, excepting the dining-room. He knew that from where he slept in the back of the house he could not hear sounds in the front. Was it the mysterious rider who had opened the cupboard?

During the day Dan went about his work as usual, and as he examined the drive he fancied he detected faint impressions of a horse's hoof, but if so it had no shoes on. This would account in some degree for Dan not hearing the horse gallop away.

Dan had a visitor at last. As he went up the drive he saw an old friend standing on the steps evidently looking round for him. It was John Crook, the gardener at the Vicarage, and he sometimes came to give Dan a helping hand and have a quiet chat.

Dan saw there was something wrong when he looked into John Crook's face.

"There was a strange thing happened last night," said Crook, "and I thought you might be able to explain about it. I haven't told anyone, and as no one said a word to me, I fancy I am the only one who saw it."

"It—saw it! Saw what?" said Dan, in amazement.

"As I was walking back from the station last night," said Crook, "I cut across the fields and past your gate at the bottom of the drive. I then went

into the plantation, but hearing the gate click I stopped and listened, and then went slowly back. I knew you were alone in the house, and wanted to see who was going to The Folly."

"And you saw Richard Raymond and the horse he killed?" said Dan.

"I did; it gave me a fright, I can tell you, and I scuttled off home as fast as I could."

"And never gave a thought to me!" said Dan.

"How could I? Such a sight as that was enough to terrify any man. It must have been his ghost, for the horse made no sound, neither did the man. Did you see them?"

"Yes; this morning. I heard a horse neigh, and got out of bed. I had a rare fright, when I saw him in the stable with the horse. He mounted and galloped away, and, like you, I heard no sound. We must keep this to ourselves, John; you must not breathe a word about it to anyone. It means ill or good for Mr. Ralph, and he'd best deal with it himself."

"Is he coming home?" asked Crook, in surprise.

"I do not know where he is, or when he is coming; but what I do know is that these strange happenings mean something. It is likely he may return. I heard the knocking at my door again the other night," said Dan.

"You're braver than I am, Dan," said Crook. "I would not sleep in that house alone if they'd give it me."

"It would not be much good to you," said Dan,



smiling. "Ghosts, a spirit, or whatever you like to call them, do not harm an old man like me."

"But it's horrible, and it's not safe," said Crook. "Come home with me to-night; it will do you good."

"Nay, John, I'm left in charge here, and a ghost or two will not frighten me away from my post; besides, all the spirits in The Folly belong to the Raymonds, and there's never one of them, no matter how bad he has been, ever harmed me or was unkind. I'll stop here until Ralph Raymond comes back, and then he can do with me as he thinks fit. I can trust a Raymond, if others cannot."

"There's some folks say they are terrible men, and that the women are—"

He stopped speaking, and they both listened and turned pale, for the sound of a horse galloping at break-neck speed reached their ears.

"He's coming up the drive! Can you see him?" asked Crook breathlessly.

"Not yet, but that's a Raymond's ride; I'd tell it anywhere," said Dan. "They go the pace, and no man ever rode up The Folly drive like that man does, except a Raymond."

## CHAPTER II

### A STORY AND A CHASE

THE horse and its rider came in sight, and the damp moss flew in all directions from the galloping hoofs.

"It's Ralph! it's Ralph!" said Dan excitedly. "I might have known it after last night. Heaven help him; he's come home at last to the Lord knows what."

Ralph Raymond rode a coal-black mare, and Crook noted how like it was to the animal he had seen last night. He galloped to the terrace steps, reined in suddenly, sprang out of the saddle, and grasped Dan's hand with a hearty grip.

"I've come home like a Raymond, at full speed. Is that what you are thinking, old friend?" he said.

"Yes; I knew it was a Raymond's ride. No horseman ever came up yonder drive so fast. This is John Crook; he's still at the Vicarage. You'll recollect him, Mr Ralph?"

The young man—he was not yet thirty—looked sharply at John Crook, and said:

"I recollect the face, but I have seen so many and travelled so far that some of the old ones have almost slipped my memory. But I remember you, John, and I hope you are well."

"Thank you, I am, Mr. Ralph. Dan and me bear our years well for old 'uns."

"There's no doubt about that," was the hearty response. "I expect there is an empty box to put Madcap in. She'll stand quiet almost anywhere, although she gallops hard when her blood is up. That was the reason I came at such a pace up the drive; but I'll tell you about it after we go inside, Dan."

"There's plenty of room in the stables," said Dan, "as you know, and I expect they'll be occupied again now you have come home."

"They may be in time; but I am not a millionaire, and there is a lot to do here before The Folly is habitable."

John Crook took his leave, and as he went, Ralph said :

"Perhaps you will give us the benefit of your advice when we start clearing up; the Vicarage garden always looked well."

"We have a new Vicar," replied Crook, "but he kept me on. He's not like the old one, though; he has too many fads and fancies. I believe he's what they calls a bit of a Roman; anyway, he's fond of candles, and incense, and processions, and the like; but he's partial to the garden, so I can put up with the rest."

Ralph laughed heartily, and said :

"You need not announce my arrival. I'll call myself some day when Dan and I have had a talk, and settled a few things here."

The gardener left, and Ralph led his horses round to the stables, Dan hurrying after him.

The owner of The Folly went towards the box in which his father committed the fatal deed that ended the life of himself and his horse.

Dan saw, hesitated a moment, and then said :

"Not in there ; please, Mr. Ralph, don't put her in there."

"And why not, Dan?"

"No good will come of it; remember what happened."

"I do remember, and a terrible sight it was. Do you think I have forgotten it, or ever shall?" said Ralph. "But that can make no difference now; it is past and done with."

"Don't put her in there," again pleaded Dan. "I'll tell you why I ask when we are indoors."

Ralph laughingly accepted his advice, and led Madcap to another box, much to Dan's relief.

"The place is in a sad state," said Ralph, looking sorrowfully round, and thinking of the time when all these boxes were well filled, "but it is none of your fault, Dan, for I had very little money to spare, although what I had was, I hope, forwarded you."

Dan explained that from time to time he received sums of money for which he was thankful, and that he had managed on it very well.

It was with difficulty they found anything for the mare to eat, and she had to rest contented with some rather musty and ancient hay, with a promise of better things on the morrow. Ralph made her as comfortable as possible, and then went inside the house.

"It's not much of a home-coming for you to be made welcome to The Folly in the kitchen," said Dan, "but it is the warmest and most comfortable place in the house."

"I have had to put up with many worse places than this since I left The Folly," laughed Ralph.

"You have been in many parts of the world, no doubt?" queried Dan.

"I have ; I tried America, and India, and eventually found my way to Australia."

Dan opened his eyes in amazement. He had heard of such places, but never expected to see anyone who had visited them ; and now his young master told him quietly, and as though it were nothing out of the common, that he had seen them all.

Dan was looking in his scantily furnished larder for something to eat, and Ralph said :

"Anything will do me, Dan. I'll be bound you have some fresh eggs and milk, and that with a loaf of bread will be ample."

Dan set out what he required on the table, and Ralph, after a good long pull at the milk, soon appeased his appetite.

They sat on either side of the fireplace, and after a pause Ralph said :

"I must have a look round the old place to-morrow, and see what can be done."

"You'll find everything as you left it, except the dust and dirt," said Dan ; "and had I known you were coming, I would have had the place cleaned up a bit."



"I am glad you had nothing done," replied Ralph. "I want to see it just as it is, and imagine how it all looked the night my father died. I have often wondered, Dan, why he shot himself, and still more why he shot the mare. Although he was a ruined man, he might have pulled together and brought things round."

"He was different to other men," said Dan. "He never did things by halves; there's not many Raymonds do that."

Ralph's face clouded, and a curious look came into his eyes, a look which the old man caught sight of, and knew it boded ill for someone.

"Why did you ask me not to take the mare into that box? What difference could it make?" asked Ralph.

"It's a strange story I have to tell, but you ought to hear it," said Dan. "I felt almost certain you would come home to-day after what I heard the night before last, and saw last night."

Ralph's curiosity was aroused, and he asked eagerly :

"Tell me all about it; what did you see?"

"Well, the night before last," went on Dan, in a low voice, "I was sleeping in yonder closet when I heard a tapping on the door. There's a Raymond's ghost about to-night, I thought, as I awoke and listened for it again. Three or four gentle knocks came, and then there was a rustle, as if someone hurried away. I was not a bit frightened, for I have heard some queer sounds in this house before."

"I never heard any," said Ralph.

"This has all happened since you left home."

"When did you first hear these noises?" asked Ralph.

"About a twelvemonth after you went away. Let me see ; how many years is it ?"

"Many," replied Ralph. "Much may happen in that time."

"And so it has, for The Folly has become a desolate house ; and what's more, it's haunted."

"Nonsense, Dan !" laughed Ralph. "We never had a ghost in the family that I am aware of."

"But that is not the strangest thing," went on Dan. "Last night I was really scared, and so would you have been if you had seen what I saw."

"A nice tale of horrors you are giving me now I have returned," laughed Ralph ; "but go on, Dan. You evidently believe in ghosts."

"I didn't until last night, but I could not doubt the evidence of my own eyes. During the night I heard a horse neigh—it must have been nearer morning—and that got me up quickly enough, for I fancied someone must be prowling about, and they could not be up to any good at that hour. I looked out of the window, the one over there, and I saw—I saw—" he hesitated.

"Go on ; I am not at all afraid."

"I saw your father, Richard Raymond, and the horse that was found shot with him," said Dan.

Ralph Raymond was startled in spite of himself ; this was something totally unexpected.

"You saw my father, and the horse he rode !" he exclaimed wonderingly.

"As true as gospel, Mr. Ralph ; and what's more,

he mounted and rode away, and the horse made no sound."

"It is very strange," said Ralph musingly.

"There's something stranger still," said Dan. "John Crook saw him enter the gate and ride up the drive, and he ran home as fast as he could, nearly frightened out of his life. He told me of it to-day, and I said he was not to mention it to a soul until you heard the news."

"This is most extraordinary," said Ralph. "It must have been someone disguised as my father; but if so, he must have had a reason, and a desperate one, for it."

"That was no living man or horse I saw, I'll swear to it," said Dan solemnly.

Ralph had his own opinion on this head, but he could find no reason to account for the apparition.

Dan put his finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket, and took out the diamond ring he had found in the box. Handing it to Ralph, he said:

"Do you recognise that?"

Ralph gave an exclamation of surprise. "It is my father's ring; where did you find it?"

"Amongst the loose straw in the box."

"How on earth did it come there?" said Ralph.

"Was it buried with your father?" asked Dan solemnly.

"No, I believe not." Then he thought for a few moments, and said: "It was given to my sister Rosalind. I am certain of it now I come to think; she took it off his finger herself, and I made no

objections. There was no reason why it should be buried with him."

"No, none at all," said Dan. "If she had the ring, how did it come to be amongst the straw?"

"That we must try and find out. The fact of the ring being there proves it was no ghost you saw, Dan."

"It was your father; I'm certain of it."

"He was found dead, and was duly buried," said Ralph; "how then could he have possibly come to The Folly?"

Dan shook his head; it was quite beyond him.

"What you have told me is indeed strange," said Ralph, "and I shall endeavour to solve the mystery. I am tired now, Dan, and I'll just have a look at Madcap, and then go to bed."

"Don't go outside to-night," said Dan, with a shudder.

Ralph laughed as he replied:

"Surely you cannot expect me to be afraid of my own father?"

"It's tempting Providence," said Dan, as Ralph taking up the lantern, went outside.

He sat down, rubbing his hands before the fire and listening for Ralph's return. Half an hour passed, and he became anxious; cautiously he went to the door, and peering out into the dim light, he fancied he saw the phantom horseman of the night before. The next thing he saw astonished him still more, for he discovered it was Ralph Raymond in the box in which his father was found dead, and that the mare was standing saddled by his side.

What was about to happen? Old Dan trembled in every limb, for coming slowly round the corner of the house into the yard he saw the man and horse that had so frightened him the night before. The light in the lantern was extinguished, but not before the approaching rider had seen it, for he turned his horse's head and quickly disappeared again.

The next thing Dan saw was Ralph Raymond, on Madcap, galloping out of the yard. Dan, putting all fear on one side, rushed to the front of the house as quickly as his tottering limbs would carry him, and there he saw two horsemen dashing down the drive at headlong speed. Ralph Raymond was in hot pursuit of Dan's phantom, and the old man trembled for his master's safety. There was no sleep for Dan Cotswold on that eventful evening.

## CHAPTER III

### A GRUESOME DISCOVERY

WHEN Ralph Raymond went to look at Madcap, it occurred to him that the mysterious visitor of the night before might return, and in that case he would have an opportunity of ascertaining who he was, and also what brought him there.

"If he is well mounted I may have to ride after him. I'll saddle the mare and wait," he said to himself.

Madcap resented the prospect of another hard gallop, but her master quietened and soothed her with kind words. He waited patiently for some time, and then saw Dan appear at the door and anxiously look round for him. Almost at the same moment his quick ears caught the tread of a horse's hoofs, and he knew by the sound it had no shoes on. He knew now why old Dan, who was slightly deaf, had not heard any sound of galloping the previous night. Peering through the open door, he caught sight of the rider, but he could not see his face, as he was closely muffled, and the light was bad. In his excitement on hearing the sound, he forgot to put out the light, and he at once extinguished it; but was too late.

With a quick movement the mysterious visitor turned his horse and rode away. Ralph led Madcap out of the box, vaulted into the saddle with an agility born of long experience, and galloped out of the yard to give chase. Many yards ahead of him he saw the flying horseman, and Madcap dashed after him down the drive at a terrific pace. There was no mistake about the way Ralph Raymond rode. His blood was up; his pulses tingled with excitement; he urged on the mare in tones she understood well, for she had often done her best in answer to them. Ralph had galloped hundreds of miles over open prairie and wild Australian wastes; he had rounded up the Mexican bronchos, and ridden desperate races over hurdles and fences on the race-course, but he had never felt as he did now.

What was this mysterious thing ahead of him which seemed to dash along with the speed of an express train? Madcap was fast, but the man ahead of him rode a still faster horse.

He wondered if the gate at the bottom of the drive was closed; if so, there was a chance for him to gain on his quarry. It was usual to find that gate fastened, but the man might have purposely left it open as he came to The Folly.

They were nearing it now, and Ralph saw it was closed. The light was better, as the moon had risen.

"I'll have him now," muttered Ralph, "phantom or no phantom."

He was mistaken. With a thrill of admiration he could not withhold, he saw the horseman ride on without hesitation.

"Great heavens! he's going to jump it," said Ralph, who admired pluck, and knew what sort of a leap this was. If this man gave him a safe lead over, he would follow, although he knew Madcap was hardly up to such a leap; still, he was not going to be beaten at his own game. He saw the man steady his mount with a practised hand, carefully measure the distance, and then his horse rose in the air, and flew the five-barred gate on her stride, landing in faultless manner on the opposite side, and going ahead at full gallop again; the rider did not look back, but bent forward to ease his mount.

"Splendid!" said Ralph. "One of the grandest leaps I ever saw. He must be on a crack chaser. It's my turn now. I wonder if the mare will clear it. There's one chance; the rails must be fairly rotten, and if she strikes heavily we may scramble through."

He rode fearlessly on, and had there been thousands of spectators present they would have watched this race with intense interest. There was, however, no race-course crowd here. Two men were striving for the mastery in a tremendous struggle, and the trees on either side of the moss-grown avenue were the only watchers, and there was a breathless stillness amongst the leaves, as though Nature was taking a hand in the great game.

Madcap pricked her ears; moonlight gallops were a novelty to her, and she wondered whether her rider had taken leave of his senses. Her thoughts at this moment, if translated, would probably have read as follows:

"He's mad. He knows I cannot get over that, but



if he's going to risk it I'm willing. He's been a good master to me, but when he wants anything done there's no chance of backing out. Here goes ; I'm in for it ! ”

Madcap rose at the formidable obstacle, but as she did so she slipped slightly on the moss. With wonderful nerve and sagacity she recovered herself, but the disadvantage was too great, and she crashed through the top part of the gate, which, as Ralph had suspected, was fortunately rotten, and it splintered into fragments on the ground. Madcap stumbled from the shock, but Ralph held her together, and she was unhurt.

“ Well done, Madcap,” he said kindly as he stroked her neck. “ If you had not slipped I believe you would have cleared it.”

The chase was continued, but Ralph had lost sight of his man.

“ Where the deuce can he have got to ? ” he thought. “ He has turned off somewhere and gone across country ; it is no use my going straight down the road, it is only a waste of time.”

Dismounting, he looked for hoof marks on each side of the road, and after some difficulty found what he required. The man had branched off in the direction of the village of St. Arvans, and gone through the plantation. This, Ralph thought, was a peculiar direction to take, and he must know his way about the district to chase it. He followed the track to the village, and when he arrived there knew he had lost his man, for it was impossible to discover which road he had then taken.

It had been a stern and exciting chase, such as Ralph Raymond loved, but he was sorry it had wound up unsuccessfully.

"I'll go back home," he said. "Old Dan will be frightened out of his wits. Of all the adventures I ever had, this is the most curious. Who can this man be? I saw no resemblance to my father, but then I had not a good view of him. Dan's feelings were probably in such a condition last night that he imagined more than he saw. Anyhow, I have been chasing no phantom. Ghosts do not ride about the country on horseback, leaping five-barred gates; at least, I never heard of such exploits. There's some mystery that I must try and solve. My father's ring being found in the stable is very strange. That man must have had it on and dropped it. It's a valuable stone, worth a couple of hundreds, I should say, and he probably returned to-night to look for it.

"With only old Dan in charge, a man such as he must have found it an easy matter to prowl about The Folly. The ring was my sister's. I wonder how he came by it? Has there been any foul play? It looks very much like it. Rosalind was not the sort of girl, when I left home, to tamely submit to any man; but she may have fallen in love, and then discovered she had met her match.

"I must make inquiries about her. But what the deuce did the fellow come to The Folly at all for? There was nothing of value to carry away that I know of. My mother's diamonds were handed over to Rosalind; but where she kept them I never inquired—probably in a bank; there was no secret

hiding-place in The Folly. It was lucky my father handed them over to her, for they must have been worth a large sum."

Musing in this way, he allowed Madcap to walk slowly up the avenue, and he was half asleep in the saddle when she entered the stable-yard.

Dan was on the watch; he had passed a terrible night, wondering, trembling to think what might become of Ralph Raymond, who had the boldness to chase the phantom of his father. Dan's belief in what he imagined he had seen would, he vowed, never be shaken.

He was desperately pleased to see Ralph safe and sound. Madcap was leg-sore and weary, for she had done the long gallop within the twelve hours.

"Back again, Dan," said Ralph, laughing; "and I had no luck. He tricked me finely."

He dismounted and attended to his mare, then followed Dan inside, and slept until ten o'clock in the morning. When he awoke he looked around in a dazed way, wondering where he was, and then recalled the adventures of the previous day. He was alone, and after washing himself, with the aid of Dan's simple appliances, he commenced to roam about the house.

How familiar it all was, and yet how strange! He peopled the dusty, damp rooms with the gay spirits that had assembled there in his father's time, when Fortune had not frowned upon them. He went up the wide staircase, and entered the room where he had slept as a boy. He remembered the bed, the furniture, and how he had sometimes been

sent there in disgrace when his pranks had been carried a little too far. Room after room he entered, glancing at the familiar objects, each one of which recalled some passing memory.

"It gives one the shivers to look at it all," he said. "I wonder if I can ever put it right again? I have money to start on, but not sufficient to keep it up. It must be done somehow, even if I have to scrape and save, and live alone with old Dan for a time."

Retracing his steps downstairs, he went into the drawing-room. The chairs looked deadly dull in their dusty coverings. Everything was sheeted, even the pictures, and there was no carpet on the floor; it stood, rolled up, propped on end in one corner of the room, like the pillar of some ancient temple. The cabinet contained very few things, as his sister had taken most of them away. The piano stood there covered with a grimy casing, and he pulled up one end of it, lifted the lid, and touched the notes. A strange, unearthly sound was produced, like the tinkling of a Jew's harp, and he hurriedly put down the lid and laughed.

"You are very much out of tune, my friend, thoroughly run down, and I am afraid you will be compelled to take a change of air to brace you up. You have seen better days, and I hope may do so again, if you are not too far gone."

Looking out of the window, he saw Dan Cotswold, and beckoned him.

"I have been nearly all over the house," said Ralph, "recalling old memories, when times were better, and

we had scenes of revelry here. Do you recollect them?"

"That I do, Mr. Ralph, and when you were born there was such a fuss and a stir as never was. There were not many sober people in St. Arvans that night, let me tell you."

"That was a sad mistake; it may have influenced my career," said Ralph, smiling.

"A drop of good ale does no man harm; that's my argument," said Dan.

"Which reminds me there is none in the house," replied Ralph.

"But there is, and rare good ale it be. There's four or five barrels that were in the cellar when you went away; I should say it be proper old and strong now."

"Do you mean to say you have kept it all these years?" asked Ralph, in surprise.

"I said it should not be tapped until you returned, and I'd have liked to see the man that would have dared to lay a hand on it," said Dan.

Ralph placed his hand on his shoulder, and said :

"You are a faithful servant, and I will never forget you. Suppose we tap one now, Dan; it will do us both good, after all we have gone through."

They proceeded to the cellar and accomplished their task, and the old ale warmed Dan's blood and made him talkative. He suddenly recollected he had not told Ralph about the signs he had noticed—that the cupboard, or safe, in the dining-room had been tampered with.

"There's something else I ought to tell you," he

said. "That sliding door in the wall in the dining-room has been opened, I am sure of it ; but who did it is more than I can tell. But there's no knowing what will happen when ghosts walk, and I've heard they can go through anything and open anything ; locks are no good to them."

Ralph's curiosity was aroused, and he accompanied Dan to the dining-room.

The iron sliding panel was in its place, but Ralph knew of the secret spring, which Dan did not.

Carefully he passed his hand over it until he felt a slight knob, and pressed it. There was a click, and he said :

" Now, Dan, we must slide it back. Stay, I dare say I can do it myself ; it was easy to open in times gone by."

Slowly the door was moved back, until Ralph could get his hand in, and he pulled it open, Dan looking on as he did so. Ralph was still forcing the door back, when Dan gave a cry of horror.

" Lord 'a mercy on us, Mr. Ralph ! Look inside !"

Ralph stepped into the room, and saw at the bottom of the safe a woman, propped up with her back to one side, in order to get the whole body in. She was dead, and stared at them with glassy eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LETTER "K"

FOR some moments they did not speak. The shock of this awful discovery held them tongue-tied. They looked at each other in fear and amazement, dreading to pry further into the mystery.

As Ralph looked at the face of the dead woman, he commenced to recognise the features. Slowly he advanced to the opening, and clutching the side of the door, said slowly in hollow tones :

"It's Rosalind, my sister, Dan. Good God ! what foul play has been going on here ?" Then turning suddenly, and looking Dan straight in the face, he said fiercely : "What do you know of this ? You must know something ; out with it !"

Dan Cotswold was bewildered, and made no answer. He could not understand this terrible business.

Ralph saw the old man knew nothing of the secret, and said kindly :

"Come here, Dan. Look at her, and see if you recognise her."

He came obediently, and after a pause said :

"It is Miss Rosalind. Poor thing ! how did she come to such an end ?"

"That will be the business of my life to discover,"

replied Ralph. "There is some connection with the mysterious stranger on horseback and this crime."

"There may be," replied Dan. "I heard no sounds in the house, but I saw the door had been moved."

Carefully they lifted the dead woman out and placed her reverently on the sofa.

As Ralph looked at her the tears stood in his eyes. This was indeed a mournful meeting with his sister after so many years. He recalled the time when as boy and girl they had romped and played together at The Folly. They had been good friends and comrades in those far-off days, but as Rosalind grew into womanhood her wilful ways somewhat estranged them, and the rash Raymond blood evidently coursed through her veins. She did and said things of which he disapproved, and there was more than one scandal started in the county about her which Ralph found hard to suppress. He did not believe her guilty of the folly of which she was accused, but he knew her conduct was such as to give good ground for village tattle and local gossip. He remonstrated with her, but his words had no effect, and despite all his efforts to shield her good name, he only indifferently succeeded. With all her faults and frivolities he had been fond of her, and as he stood looking at her lifeless form, he was determined to have justice upon the man who had done this deed.

Stooping over her, he saw marks round her neck which clearly proved she had been strangled.

"Were there any signs of a struggle in the room?" he asked.

"None," replied Dan.



"Then she must have been murdered outside the house and carried in here, and the man who did it knew how to enter, and also was aware of this safe, and how to open it. Only one person could have shown him how to do it, and that was my sister. They probably came here together with some object in view ; but what that was, I cannot guess. Do you think it probable Rosalind concealed anything valuable in here before she left home ?"

"She may have done so ; but why did she leave it there so long if such were the case ?"

"It is very extraordinary," muttered Ralph. Then suddenly he said : "No one must know of this, Dan."

"Do you mean you will keep her death secret ?"

"Yes ; it is the best chance I have of finding out the man who killed her."

"But it's dangerous," said Dan. "The law—what about the law ?"

"I intend to take this matter out of the hands of the law. It will not be the first time a Raymond has taken the law in his own hands."

"It will not," said Dan ; "but this is a terrible thing to do, and, Mr. Ralph, take my advice, place it in the proper quarter ; tell the police and the Vicar."

"No," replied Ralph firmly. "I have made up my mind, and you must help me to carry out my plan."

Dan Cotswold shook his head sadly, and said :

"It's wrong, all wrong, and no good will come of it."

"Right or wrong, you are not to blame," said Ralph.

"It will be my doing, not yours. All I require of you is to keep the secret ; you will promise me that ?"

"I'll promise," said Dan slowly; "but I wish I had never lived to see this day."

"It is to help me you do it, and you will not fail me," said Ralph.

"What shall you do with her?"

"Bury her in the grounds," said Ralph.

"That's no Christian burial," said Dan, horrified.

Ralph smiled queerly, and replied:

"If it will ease your conscience, I will read the Burial Service over her; but believe me, when and where she is buried will make no difference in the end."

"I hope it will never come to pass with me," replied Dan solemnly. "A churchyard is the place I'd like my old bones to rest in."

"So they shall, Dan, but not for many years, I hope."

"This job will about finish me," said Dan. "It must have been her ghost tapped on my door."

"More probably the man who hid her away, in order to frighten you, and thus do his villainous work the better."

Covering the body carefully, Ralph Raymond proceeded to make a minute investigation of the place where it was found. There was no sign that anything valuable had been concealed there, and yet from what he knew of his sister's habits, he fancied she might have hidden something here, intending to make use of it in case necessity forced her hand.

Leaving the room, he went outside, and presently Dan heard him sawing wood, and the sound made him shudder.

"It's the coffin he's at," he muttered; "it's an unholy business, but there's no use in trying to turn a Raymond from his course."

Ralph came in, his face covered with perspiration, and his arms bare to the elbows.

"It's no good, you must give me a hand," he said. "I cannot finish it myself."

There was no occasion for Dan to ask what he meant, or why he wanted help. Reluctantly he followed him out into the timber shed, which had not been used for a long time. They worked hard, and before night the rudely constructed coffin was finished.

Next day they buried Rosalind Raymond in The Folly garden, amidst a scene of desolation that has seldom been equalled. The rank grass grew all round, and the shrubs and tangled undergrowth struggled with each other for the mastery. The grave was deep, and had caused them much toil, but now it was all over. Ralph Raymond was satisfied, and commenced to plan out the course he should take to discover the betrayer of his sister. He noticed she wore no wedding ring, nor had she any rings upon her fingers. She had been fond of rings, and possessed several of value, and he surmised these were now in the possession of the man who had taken her life. Ralph had no intention of remaining at The Folly now, or of altering it in any way, until he had done everything in his power to avenge his sister. This he knew was no easy task, but there was one clue he possessed which might prove profitable in the end. The man he had chased so furiously down the drive was a fine horseman, and rode a grand mare. Ralph

was almost certain that this man had done the deed, and although he could not recognise him, he fancied the horse he rode would be easy to single out. He had a shrewd knowledge of human nature. His sister was always fond of horses, and rode well ; moreover, she had inherited a passion for the turf and outdoor sports from her father.

It seemed probable that, left to her own devices, she might have met with some man connected with racing, and their inclinations being in the same direction, they might have gone about together, and eventually he probably obtained some hold over her.

Ralph was a good rider, and knew it would be an easy matter for him to obtain a footing on the turf. He had sufficient money to make a start, and he determined to commence with a small stable, and train his own horses. It was a hazardous and risky experiment, but he was fond of taking risks, and the idea pleased him.

Something seemed to tell him this was the way to find the man he wanted, or at any rate to obtain a clue as to his identity. If his sister had been a constant attendant at race meetings, her absence would be noted, and when questioned about it, he could readily say she had gone abroad for a time. He gave no thought to any suspicion that might attach to himself should his disposal of the body by some means be discovered.

He took Dan into his confidence as to what he intended doing, and the old man looked sad and woebegone.

" It'll be a sore trial to me to stay here with *that*

in the garden ; but if you say it has to be done, here I'll remain," he said.

"You must stay," said Ralph. "I cannot put a new man in your place, but if you wish, you shall have a companion. Do you know of anyone who would be suitable?"

"I want no company," he replied. "John Crook will come up at nights if I want him. Suppose that man on horseback comes again?"

"He'll not come ; you need have no fear of that, after the fright I gave him. He will know it was Ralph Raymond who rode after him ; no other man would have given him such a stern chase."

Dan looked doubtful. He still held to the belief that what he had seen was not mortal, and ghosts had no fear of capture.

"If you hear any mysterious sounds in the house," said Ralph, "keep a sharp look-out. I do not think anyone will harm an old man like you, not even a ghost, Dan."

"She'll never sleep in that grave," said Dan.

Ralph Raymond turned impatiently away. Had he done right by his sister? was the thought that now crossed his mind for the first time, and it irritated him.

Right or wrong, it was over, and could not be altered. Things must take their course.

He roamed about the grounds, stumbling over hidden stumps, and tripping in the long grass, which seemed like whip-cords curling round his legs. Brooding over all that had taken place, he angrily found that he had unwittingly walked to the spot

where his sister was buried. He started as he saw signs that the earth had been freshly stirred. A strange sensation came over him. What if someone had seen them at work? That was hardly possible, and yet such might have been the case.

Stooping down, he examined the earth carefully, and with a sigh of satisfaction discovered a mole had been at work.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered. "I might be guilty of some crime. It is the first time in my life I ever felt a sign of fear. There's something uncanny about the atmosphere this afternoon, it is damp and depressing, and Nature seems to be meditating some disturbance. There is an old legend that we Raymonds can communicate with each other after death, the living with the dead. What nonsense it all is! I don't believe a word of it."

The moaning of the wind in the trees sounded like human voices in pain. Despite his strong will and powers of control, he felt uncomfortable. As he turned away, his foot slipped on the loose earth, and looking down, he saw a distinct letter "K" formed. Again he was startled; then he thought:

"A mere accident, but it may mean something. I will not forget that letter."

## CHAPTER V

### THE RESEMBLANCE

IT was with a sad heart Ralph Raymond bade good-bye to Dan Cotswold, and the faithful old retainer was overcome with grief.

"Nothing but evil will come of it," he muttered as he watched his master ride down the avenue on Madcap.

Ralph turned and waved his hand to him before he disappeared from view. He avoided the village and took the least frequented road. His long absence from the district would ensure secrecy, for he felt sure no one would recognise him. For many miles he rode on, and put up for the night at a lonely country inn. He was away early next morning, and reached Derby in the afternoon. From there he took train to London, leaving Madcap to be sent on after him.

He knew very few people in London, and no one was aware of his arrival home, with the exception of Dan Cotswold and John Crook. He commenced to consider whether it would not be better for him to take another name, but on second thoughts he saw no necessity for it.

He passed down Fleet Street, and when near the

offices of one of the large sporting papers it occurred to him that he might insert an advertisement for a private training ground, such as he desired to rent. With this intention he went inside, and wrote out his requirements.

"Is the editor disengaged?" he asked.

The clerk looked at him, and said: "What name?"

"Ralph Raymond," he replied; and then added: "You can say I came from Australia, and mention about the advertisement."

He waited a few minutes, and was then conducted to the editor's sanctum, where he was courteously received. In a few brief words he explained what he intended doing, and asked if there would be any difficulty in obtaining a license to ride.

"As a gentleman or a professional?" asked the editor.

"In various part of the world I have ridden as a gentleman, but here I would prefer to join the professional ranks. I am not a particularly rich man," he added, with a smile, "and if my riding meets with approval it would be a means of adding to my income."

"Do you know many sportsmen here?"

"No, but most people connected with racing will recollect my father, and also his sad end."

"Are you the son of Richard Raymond, of The Folly?" asked the editor, with added interest. "I recollect the sensation his death caused; it must have been a sad blow to you."

"I am the son of Richard Raymond, and The Folly



is mine; but the old place has gone to rack and ruin, and at present I have but small hopes of being able to put it in order and make it habitable. With a little luck, perhaps, I might be able to do so."

The editor smiled; experience had taught him that owning and training horses was not a very certain way to wealth, although successful jockeyship might be.

"I should think there will be very little difficulty in your obtaining a license," he said. "If you wish I will insert a paragraph about you; it will be interesting reading, and being the son of such a well-known man, it is sure to attract attention."

Ralph thanked him, and proceeded to give an account of his career, what races he had won, and the weight he could get down to if necessary. He also made mention of several incidents connected with his father which had never been made public.

The editor saw the information would develop into a really good article, and determined to spin it out. He asked Ralph to call again, and said he would be happy to assist him in any way in which he could be of use.

Next morning Ralph read a glowing account of his career, and acknowledged that the editor had made excellent use of the material given him.

He had not to wait long for an answer to his advertisement; in fact, during the week he had several places offered him.

He selected a quiet, comfortable establishment on the Bankshire Downs called Heath Lodge. The house was small, but suitable for his requirements.

There was good stabling for sixteen horses, and the Downs were noted for their good gallops. Moreover, he had the sole use of the best portion, a privilege attaching to Heath Lodge. He took the place as it stood, the house being furnished, and at once entered into possession. Like many men who have travelled in various parts of the world, it did not trouble him to be alone in a house for a few weeks. He could turn his hand to most things required ; his experience in the bush had taught him that. The country round the Downs was sparsely populated, but the new arrival at Heath Lodge soon became an object of interest to the inhabitants of the scattered houses. They regarded him as a mysterious stranger, and wondered how a man could live alone in such a house.

Buntontown, generally called Bunton for short, was the nearest market town, and thither Ralph went in search of someone to look after his house. He had considerable difficulty in finding a suitable person, but at last the landlord of the Bunton Arms told him he thought the widow of a trainer, who had recently died and left her in poor circumstances, might be induced to undertake the duties. Ralph called to see her, and after some hesitation on her part, Mrs. Mersey consented, and in a few days came to Heath Lodge, bringing a servant, who had been in her employ, with her.

His household arrangements having been placed on a satisfactory footing, Ralph commenced to look round for a couple of useful horses, and for this purpose he attended several race meetings, and

bought a selling plater at Kempton which he fancied would prove a bargain.

The account given in the paper of his career drew considerable attention towards him, and many men who had known his father in his prosperous days claimed acquaintance with him ; some of them had known him before he went abroad.

A man of such an interesting personality as Ralph Raymond does not lack for friends amongst sporting men, or, indeed, any other class of men. He had very little difficulty about obtaining his license, and in a very short time had five useful horses in training, and had round him some handy lads, who could ride, and were fairly well educated. It was of much assistance to him that Mrs. Mersey had experience of the management of a trainer's house. Her husband had been one of the unlucky members of his profession. He narrowly missed bringing off several coups, but such defeats are aggravating, and do not tend to strengthen a man's faith in his calling.

She could not understand Ralph Raymond, but that was not to be wondered at—very few people had ever been able to quite comprehend any of the Raymonds of The Folly, and her intelligence was not above the average. Yet she liked him, and thought him a man to be trusted, and in this she was right.

Ralph, left alone in his room at night, could not help brooding over the sensations he had experienced at The Folly. Old Dan wrote to him in a scrawling, trembling hand, but in his letters no mention was made of his sister's burial in the garden, and this was only natural ; still, Ralph knew if anything out of the

common occurred, Dan would not fail to inform him. He was puzzled how to set to work to accomplish his object ; it was a matter that required time and care, and he had to trust very much to chance. His occupation took up most of his spare time, and this was good for him. The life he led was healthy, and the air of the Bankshire Downs bracing and invigorating. He loved the life, and when dealing with horses he was always contented.

Amongst the lot in his stable he gave the preference to a mare called Fearless, a four-year-old bay that he had picked up for a hundred at Newmarket. He soon found out he had a bargain, and her first gallop was a surprise to him. She was a mare that required a lot of strong work, and the more she was galloped, the better she seemed to like it. Ralph generally rode her himself, and he was rapidly getting into racing trim. The mare took to him from the first ; it is so sometimes with men and horses. He was, however, in no hurry to make his appearance on the race-course, or to run any of his horses until they were thoroughly wound up, and he had fully gauged their capacity. The life he led was lonely, but he did not seem to mind it, although he would have preferred a friend to live with him whose sporting ideas were in harmony with his own.

Mrs. Mersey was talkative, but he seldom gave her much encouragement, and her conversation, which was generally of a personal nature, failed to interest him.

"If it had not been for Francis Kearney," she said one night to him, "my husband might have been a

different man ; but he ruined him, although I often warned him against him."

Ralph made no comment, and she continued :

"He was fond of riding, and was a splendid horseman, but he could not go straight."

"Did he ride the horse your husband trained?" asked Ralph.

"Yes ; generally in hurdle races or steeplechases ; he was too heavy to ride on the flat, except in welter races."

"And so you think he wronged Mr. Mersey?"

"I am sure of it, although Jack would hear nothing against him. He was a bad man in more ways than one. He had a good-looking wife, younger than himself, and I always said he treated her badly. She was very fond of horses and racing, and she could ride as well as himself."

"What made you think he treated her badly?"

"She was high-spirited and wilful, and he used to tease her and irritate her instead of humouring her a bit, as women want at times."

Ralph smiled, and thought it probable the late Mr. Mersey had not humoured his wife much.

"He comes down to Bunton sometimes, but not many people like him. He never brings his wife with him now, which goes to prove what I say that he is not over-kind to her."

"Perhaps she does not care to come now he has no horses here," said Ralph.

"But he has, on the other side of the Downs, where my husband lived. He has five or six there, I know. I don't think he has much money ; at least,

he had none when my husband died, although he seems to have come into some lately."

All of which failed to rouse Ralph's curiosity, and he continued reading the paper.

Mrs. Mersey was looking at him intently, but he was absorbed in an interesting article, and failed to notice the earnestness of her gaze.

"You don't mind me saying something, sir," she said. "I hope you will not think me personal."

"Oh, dear, no! What is it, Mrs. Mersey?"

"Well, you'll excuse me, but there's a strange resemblance between yourself and Mrs. Kearney. You might almost be taken for brother and sister."

The paper dropped from Ralph's hand, and he started from his seat.

"What do you mean?" he asked incoherently.

"What I say, sir. I hope you are not offended."

"Not at all; but I have a sister, and I cannot find out what has become of her. You see, I have been abroad for some time. You startled me by saying Mrs. Kearney resembled me, that is all."

"Strange," he muttered to himself. "It was the letter 'K' on her grave. Only a coincidence, of course. The thing's absurd, but nevertheless I am anxious to meet Francis Kearney."

"She was not quite so tall as you, but she had your eyes and hair, and your voice reminded me of her. It would be very strange if she happened to be your sister."

"It would be very strange indeed, Mrs. Mersey," said Ralph, "but I do not think there is any

probability of such being the case ; at least, I hope not, after what you have said."

Ralph Raymond thought over Mrs. Mersey's remarks when she left him, and he determined to see Francis Kearney, and obtain an introduction to him at the first favourable opportunity.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SAME HORSE

RALPH RAYMOND'S endeavour to meet Francis Kearney proved fruitless. He rode over to his stables on the far side of the Downs, but when he inquired for the object of his search he was informed by the trainer, Henry Loughton, there was no probability of seeing him at present, as he had gone abroad for a time.

This was a disappointment to Ralph, and he said :  
"When do you expect him to return home?"

"I really cannot say ; his movements are always very uncertain, and sometimes I do not see him for weeks. He allows me to do pretty much as I like with his horses, and finds it pays best," said Loughton, smiling.

"Which means that your judgment is better than his," replied Ralph.

"Put it that way if you like. Mr. Kearney is a fine rider, but he does not know how to place his horses ; he flies at the high game."

"We are all apt to do so at times," replied Ralph.

Henry Loughton frequently met Ralph on the Downs, and they became more confidential, but



nothing passed between them regarding Francis Kearney which brought Ralph any nearer the mark.

At various race meetings, however, he heard more of him, and also of Mr. Kearney, and he became more and more convinced that in some unaccountable way this man had been connected with his sister, but whether he committed the crime was another matter.

The weeks passed quickly by, and at last Ralph decided to try his luck with Fearless in the Kempton Grand Hurdle race. It was a substantial prize, and all the crack jumpers were entered, but he did not mind this as the mare had been well tried, and he knew he would be able to obtain a long price about her. He rode her at exercise and thoroughly schooled her, and had very little fear of her making any mistakes at the jumps. He meant to ride her himself, and it would be his first appearance in the saddle in public since his return home.

The final gallop took place, and the mare arrived safely at Kempton.

In the paddock Ralph was occupied with attending to his mount, and had no time to pay much attention to the other runners, of which there were fourteen. He gave the commission to back Fearless to a well-known man, who got the money on at a hundred to eight, a price with which he was well satisfied.

Many people on the look-out for a probable winner halted at Fearless, for she was a mare that was bound to attract the attention of good judges. As for

Ralph, who had on the black jacket with a white star on the front, the colours of the Raymonds for many years past, his athletic figure and firm, determined countenance were such as to inspire confidence, although he was an unknown quantity as a horseman.

"He looks as if he could ride, and that is a very fine mare. Who is he?"

The comment was made and the question asked by a middle-aged gentleman, who addressed his remark to a jockey standing at his side.

"That's Ralph Raymond, and his mare Fearless; he rides her himself, as you see," said Dick Mear, a well-known hurdle race rider.

"Oh that's Raymond, is it," said Colonel Adrian Ilford. "I knew his father. They are a dare-devil lot the Raymonds. I wonder if he'll beat us to-day, Dick?"

"Ask him," was the jockey's quick reply.

The Colonel hesitated a moment. He had no knowledge of Ralph personally, nor had he any wish to intrude upon him at such a moment and ply him with questions; still, having known Richard Raymond, he was rather anxious to claim the acquaintance of his son.

Stepping up to Ralph, he said:

"I ought to have remembered the black jacket and white star of the Raymonds, but it is so long since I have seen it on the race-course that it failed to recall many memories. My jockey says you are Ralph Raymond; allow me to introduce myself—I am Colonel Ilford."

Ralph looked at the tall military figure, and holding out his hand, said:

"I am pleased to meet you. I have heard my father speak of you."

"I knew him well; he ought to have been a soldier; he would have made a good one."

"And ended his life in a very different way," replied Ralph, with a tone of sadness in his voice.

"I am sure of it, but he was a wilful man, and you know the old adage," said Colonel Ilford. "I have a horse running in this race—Culloden—and he is nearly favourite. I wonder if you will beat me?"

"I shall try," said Ralph, smiling.

"No doubt; and being a Raymond of The Folly, it goes without saying you can ride."

"I do not think I shall part company with Fearless during the race, unless something very untoward happens. She is a fine fencer, and although I do not know what Culloden can do, I think I have a very good chance."

"Do you know Mear? He is riding for me."

"No."

The Colonel beckoned Dick Mear, who said he was glad to know Ralph.

"And I hope I shall beat you in the race," he added, with a smile.

"We shall see," replied Ralph. "You will have to be on something smart to do it."

"Culloden is fast enough over ten miles, and a sure fencer, but you have a good pull in the weight, and that mare looks in capital trim," was the reply.

"She is," said Ralph, "so we may be together at the finish."

"Well, there is no time to lose now," said Colonel Ilford, as the bell rang again. "I hope to see you after the race; I shall save a little on your mare."

"Do," said Ralph, laughing, "and then it will be all the more pleasant to meet you if I beat you."

The horses filed out of the paddock and dashed down the course in bunches of twos and threes, and the remainder in Indian file.

Dick Mear, however, took Culloden slowly down to the post, and Ralph did not notice the pink jacket and white sash Mear wore, and the horse he had not yet seen.

There was no delay at the post, and the lot were soon on their journey.

Fearless having a light weight, Ralph determined to make good use of it, but he was not disposed to face the pace. He got well away, and then steadying his mount, held a nice position about fifth or sixth. He noticed two of the leaders were slovenly jumpers, and carefully avoided them; he did not intend to come to grief by accident. It was a pretty race, one evenly run, as they often are at Kempton.

Dick Mear was husbanding Culloden, who was the top weight, and the horse fenced splendidly with all his burden. He was keeping a keen eye on the black jacket and following close after Fearless, as he saw the mare was not likely to blunder.

Half a mile from the winning-post a cannon occurred between Fairy and Harold as they rose at a fence, and both came down with a crash, rolling over each other,

and Ralph had to do all he knew to prevent Fearless falling, but he skilfully avoided it, although he lost a considerable quantity of ground.

Culloden's opportunity now came, and Mear rode him through the open space caused by the fallen hurdle. This gave him a good four lengths lead of Fearless, and for the first time Ralph saw him in the race. At first he fixed his eyes on the rider, and wondered if Culloden had much left in him. He thought he could tell by Mear's movements at the finish if his mount was beaten. It would be of no use struggling hopelessly on to the bitter end if he had no chance of winning; it would be better to reserve such a tussle for another day. Culloden rose at the last hurdle, and flew it in splendid style.

Ralph watched him and thought: "I have seen that horse before, but where?"

It seemed impossible. He had not known the horse's name until he heard it in the paddock.

The way the horse rose at the fence reminded him of something else; what was it? Anyhow, he had to beat him, and he fancied he saw Mear glance back anxiously. He urged Fearless forward, and the mare responded gamely enough.

"It's a stern chase," thought Ralph, and then in a remarkable manner the vision of that other stern chase at The Folly flashed before him. He saw it all again, and he knew where he had seen Culloden before. The rider was not the same, he was a much more powerful man, but the horse—yes, he could swear he was chasing the same horse now that he had ridden after so desperately down The Folly drive.

Again he saw Culloden clear that five-barred gate. He had lost that chase; he did not mean to lose this. Culloden had beaten Madcap; he should not beat Fearless. Some of the devil that rose in him on that memorable night came to life again, and permeated his whole body. The mare felt it, and she sprang forward with a bound, as though she had received an electric shock. It was that strange communication of feeling and will-power which often passes from man to beast.

The crowds on the stands and in the ring, who had regarded the race as over, and Culloden as the winner, now found something more exciting to occupy their attention. Fearless was gaining rapidly on the leader, and Mear heard the ominous sounds behind him.

Even in this critical moment, with so much depending upon it, Ralph's mind was divided between Kempton course and The Folly drive.

On, on, on crept Fearless, and raced up to Culloden. They were neck and neck, stride for stride, for a brief second, and then the mare's lighter weight told, and the gallant top weight had to lower his colours. The pink jacket was beaten, and the Raymond black was carried past the post a couple of lengths in front of the favourite.

Ralph had no thought of his victory as he rode back to the paddock. He had a natural feeling of exultation, which comes to every man who plays a winning game, but his mind was concentrated on the remarkable resemblance between Culloden and Dan Cotswold's "Phantom." He felt he was not mistaken in the horse; something told him he had now found a

clue to the mystery. But what could a man like Colonel Ilford have to do with such a dark deed? was the next question he asked himself, and found no solution. Thinking deeply, he rode into the paddock, and was about to dismount, when the lad who looked after Fearless, and had rushed to meet him, overwhelmed with pride at the victory of his charge, said :

“ You have not weighed in yet ; don't dismount.”

“ No more I have, Billy,” said Ralph; “ thank you for reminding me. I must have been dreaming.”

“ This is a rum go,” thought Billy, as he followed closely after him. “ Fancy a fellow forgetting he's won a race. Give me the chance, I reckon I'd make my way to the weighing-room as quickly as possible.”

Having accomplished the necessary weighing, Ralph allowed the boy to lead the horse away, and went into the jockey's room to dress. Here he found Mear, who was not over-pleased at his defeat, although he treated Ralph courteously.

“ I think I was rather unlucky to lose,” said Mear. “ What is your opinion ? ”

“ I think you would have been in luck's way had you won ; I nearly came down when those horses fell, and it gave you a chance to get through,” was Ralph's reply.

“ It was a good race, anyhow, and the Colonel seems well pleased. I rather fancy he is a winner over the result,” said Mear.

“ He is a good horse, Culloden,” said Ralph.

“ One of the best I ever rode, although the man he bought him from did his utmost to ruin him.”

"How?" asked Ralph.

"He used to ride him to death, hunt with him, steeplechase with him, and ride him in welter races on the flat. That's enough to take the heart out of any animal."

"What was his name?" asked Ralph.

"The name of the man who sold Culloden to Colonel Ilford?"

"Yes."

"Francis Kearney," replied Mear, and the reply was not unexpected by Ralph Raymond.



## CHAPTER VII

### DAN'S SURPRISE

"YOU beat me, young man; but thanks to your advice about Fearless, I was not a loser over the race," said Colonel Ilford, as he met Ralph in the paddock.

"I am glad of that," replied Ralph. "I had a very good win for me; it was a hard task to beat Culloden; but I am proud I succeeded."

"The horse is a good one. I wish I owned him outright; but he is only leased for twelve months, and I am sorry to say the time has almost expired."

Ralph was surprised to hear this after what Mear had told him, and said:

"I understood from your jockey that he was your property."

"So he is, for the time being; but the fact is, as I have told you, I came by him in rather a curious way; but perhaps it will not interest you to hear about it."

"On the contrary," said Ralph, "I shall be glad to hear all you have to say in the matter, for I think I have seen Culloden before."

"Probably," replied Colonel Ilford; "he has run several times."

"It was not on the race-course I saw him."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Colonel, surprised;  
"then where was it?"

"I cannot tell you at present," replied Ralph;  
"and I may be mistaken; but some day you may hear about it."

Colonel Ilford looked at him with his keen soldierly glance; he knew the character of the Raymonds, and probably Ralph had inherited many of his father's qualities, good and bad. There was generally some mystery connected with them, and perhaps Ralph had something to conceal—at any rate, it was not his business to question him, and as he had proffered the information about Culloden, he would give it without comment on Ralph's remark.

"I was at my club one evening," said Colonel Ilford, "when Francis Kearney, who owns the horse, entered with a friend. I knew him, but not the man he was with, and he did not introduce me, which I thought rather strange. We entered into conversation, and as usual we drifted into racing talk. Ordinary topics were discussed for some time, and Culloden's name was mentioned by me.

"'You like him?' said Kearney.

"'I think he is a very good horse, one of the best of his class,' I replied.

"'I will lease him to you if you wish,' said Kearney quickly. 'I know he will be in good hands, and I am going abroad for some months, so shall not want him. Culloden has done me many a good turn; he did me the best turn I ever had in my life the other night.'

"'Night!' I exclaimed in surprise.

"'A slip of the tongue, Colonel; I meant day,' he replied, with a peculiar smile.

"Now all I had heard of this man led me to the conclusion that he was not to be trusted, and being a fairly accurate reader of character, I came to the conclusion that when he said night that was correct, and day was a mere necessary correction. You may think it strange I took that view of it?"

"Not at all," said Ralph, who was growing more and more interested in the Colonel's story.

"Where had he been on such a horse as Culloden at night? was the question I asked myself."

"Naturally," replied Ralph. "Where had he been?"

He fancied he could enlighten Colonel Ilford on that point, but it would not be policy to do so. Still, he might require assistance some day, and Colonel Ilford was a man to be relied upon.

"I went on to say that Culloden had been somewhat roughly handled, and that, in my opinion, Kearney would have done better with him had he not ridden him so much on ordinary occasions.

"Kearney replied that he thought it a good way to train a horse for steeplechasing to give him experience over all kinds of country. I agreed with him to a certain extent, but the night ride had rather opened my eyes. I wonder what the devil he was after on that occasion?"

"When he took his night ride?" said Ralph.

"Yes; I am glad you agree with me that my surmise is correct."

"I think it probable from what I have heard of him."

"Where the deuce did you hear about him?"

"Henry Loughton, who trains for him, has stables not far from mine on the Bankshire Downs," replied Ralph.

"You have a place there?"

"Yes; Heath Lodge. It is a quiet, old-fashioned spot, and if you care to run over any time I shall be very pleased to welcome you."

"Thanks, I shall be only too delighted. I know that country well; you have chosen a first-rate place," said Colonel Ilford, who then resumed his conversation about Culloden.

"Kearney was evidently anxious to retain possession of the horse. I asked him to put a price upon him, but he would not. He said Culloden was his favourite, and he did not wish to sell him outright. At last we agreed to terms, and that is nearly nine months ago, so that the lease is nearly up. I often wonder who the man was that accompanied Kearney that night. He seemed to me to watch every movement of his companion, but he did not make the slightest attempt to approach us, or manifest any inclination to be introduced to me."

"It was rather a curious way to come into possession of the horse," said Ralph. "By the way, Colonel, you will excuse me asking the question, but was Kearney married, and did you ever see his wife?"

"I have seen a dark, fine-looking lady with him at race meetings sometimes." Then after a pause, and

looking at Ralph, he added : " That's curious ; she was not unlike yourself."

Ralph Raymond laughed curiously. Mrs. Mersey had noticed a resemblance, now Colonel Ilford supported her. He was becoming still more interested in Francis Kearney and his doings.

" Strange she should resemble me," he replied.

" Very, but there is no doubt about it. A curious coincidence, nothing more."

" No, nothing more," said Ralph, with his peculiar smile.

They shook hands and parted, Colonel Ilford promising to pay Ralph a visit at Heath Lodge. Ralph Raymond's win over the victory of Fearless was substantial, and out of his gains he sent Dan Cotswold a twenty-pound note, and a letter in which he related how the race was run, and the excitement he experienced at winning on his first mount in England. He made no mention of his conversation with Colonel Ilford, nor did he allude in any way to Francis Kearney. Dan was much perplexed what to do with his twenty-pound note. He had never seen one before, and the crispness of the paper was new to him. The old man never gave a thought to savings banks, or any other banks, and he had very little use for money.

Twenty pounds was a large sum, and Ralph had impressed upon him that it was for himself, and not to be used for The Folly. Ralph's word being law to Dan, he accepted the gift as intended ; but what must be done with it ? His brain worked slowly ; he had lived many years alone, surrounded by desolation and

decay, which had not tended to brighten him, or enliven his spirits.

Fingering the note tenderly, not because of its value, but because it was the gift of Ralph, it occurred to him at last that the secret cupboard in the dining-room wall would be the safest place to secrete it in.

"He may want it some day," was Dan's thought, "and it is no good to me."

Dan had locked the door of the room in which the gruesome discovery was made, when Ralph Raymond left The Folly, and had avoided it ever since. He dreaded opening it again, still more the cupboard; but he determined to hide his note there.

In obedience to his decision, he took the key from its place and opened the door.

He entered the room hesitatingly, although it was broad daylight, and looked about him suspiciously.

Shivering slightly, but not with cold, he walked across the room.

There was the sofa on which they had laid Miss Rosalind, and he fancied he saw her still form again.

"The sooner I get it over the better," he muttered, and pressing the knob, pulled back the sliding door.

Hurriedly he put the note in, and banged the door back with a clang.

"That's safe," he said. "No one will find it without it's a ghost, or something of that kind."

His life was one of daily monotonous rounds, and he had very little strength to accomplish much work in the tangled wilderness around him. Sadness brooded over The Folly, and this was part of Dan's

heritage. Many times he sat on the terrace steps and thought over the fallen fortunes of the Raymonds.

One spot in the grounds always possessed an irresistible fascination for him. This was the place where Rosalind Raymond lay buried in such unhallowed fashion. Sorely troubled was Dan over this act of Ralph's, and it had aged him much.

The night of the day he placed the note in the cupboard he slept badly. He fancied he heard all kinds of mysterious sounds, and again came the tapping on his door. Restless and uneasy, he tossed about from side to side, until in the early morning he fell into a broken slumber.

He slept longer than usual, and the sun shone brightly as he looked out of the window.

Everything seemed the same, just as it had been for years, but something impelled him to visit the dining-room, and see if his precious note was safe.

He entered the room and opened the door with trembling hands.

One glance was sufficient. The note had disappeared!

## CHAPTER VIII

### A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

DAN COTSWOLD gazed in astonishment at the empty cupboard. There was something uncanny about it all. He wondered if he had really placed the note there. Of course he had, he was quite sure of it; his memory did not fail him yet, and he had not lost his senses.

How had the note disappeared? Ghosts stood in no need of money, but mortals were anxious to possess it, and therefore Dan came to the conclusion that someone had been in the house.

He searched the room to find evidence to corroborate this view, but discovered no signs to enlighten him.

He went into the grounds and made a further examination, but found nothing unusual.

Dan's thoughts did not move quickly, and it would have puzzled a cleverer brain to have solved the mystery.

One thing was clear: he must communicate with Ralph, and put him in possession of the facts. Dan was a bad correspondent, but after some trouble he contrived to write a letter in a trembling hand, which gave a fairly accurate account of the disappearance of the note.



When Ralph received it the contents startled him. It was clear to him that only one person could have abstracted the note, and that was the man who had murdered his sister and placed her body in the cupboard. What was his reason for returning to the house and looking again at his gruesome handiwork? Had some warning reached him that it was not a safe hiding-place for the body, or had his (Ralph's) sudden appearance in England again frightened him?

Francis Kearney, so it was said, was abroad, and this being so he could not be the man. Kearney, however, might have given out that he was leaving the country in order to divert suspicion from himself, and make his second visit to The Folly safe.

Since he had recognised in Culloden the horse he had followed along the drive on Madcap, and learned that he was leased by Francis Kearney to Colonel Ilford, Ralph had no doubt whatever as to who was the man who had murdered his sister. Everything pointed in this direction. Kearney's wife, or the lady who passed as his wife, was stated by Mrs Mersey and Colonel Ilford to resemble him so closely that they might be taken for brother and sister. This was startling in itself, and afforded a strong clue, which, on being followed up, had received further corroboration.

How had Francis Kearney become acquainted with Rosalind, and why had he found it necessary to do away with her? Ralph asked himself. This he meant to find out at any cost.

After reading Dan's letter a second time, he

determined to proceed to The Folly and look round for himself. His eyes were keener than Dan's, and he might possibly discover something which had escaped the old man's notice.

His arrival was not unexpected, for Dan felt sure he would come, and was very glad to see him again.

"So you have had another fright," said Ralph, smiling.

"It startled me above a bit when I found the note gone," replied Dan. "I thought it was in a safe hiding-place."

"Did you hear any sound in the night?"

"No, and I found no traces of anyone having been in the room."

Ralph looked carefully into the cupboard and round the room, but his search was as fruitless as Dan's. There were no traces of anyone having recently been there.

"The door and the windows were fastened," said Dan. "How the thief got inside the house puzzles me."

"A clever burglar could easily get into The Folly," said Ralph. "I am afraid the locks and window catches are all out of order, and easy to tamper with."

Into the garden Ralph went, Dan following him. He went to the spot where Rosalind was buried, and here he made a rather startling discovery. The ground had been turned over with a fork or a spade; there were no traces of moles on this occasion. Why had this particular spot been disturbed, and by whom? Did the mysterious visitor to The Folly,

when he opened the cupboard and found the body gone, search for it in the garden, and by accident come upon this spot. This was hardly probable, and yet there was no doubt the ground had been examined.

Ralph felt uneasy. Was it possible the digger had found out that someone was buried here?

"Go and bring me a spade, Dan," said Ralph.

Dan hesitated, and then said: "What are you going to do?"

"Examine the coffin and see if there are any fresh marks upon it," he replied. "Come, be quick! I have no time to lose, and we do not want anyone to see us."

"Leave her in peace, Mr. Ralph," said Dan earnestly. "We have done wrong in putting her there, but let her rest now."

Ralph turned sharply round and walked towards the house.

"I will go myself," he said.

"Nay," replied Dan, "if you must have it, I will go," and he hurried away on his errand.

Ralph stopped, turned round, and walked back again, and stood impatiently waiting for him.

Dan soon returned with a spade and fork.

"Which will you have?" he asked.

"Are you going to give me a hand?"

"Yes, but it's sorry work; and as I told you before, no good will come of it."

Ralph took the fork, and angrily stuck it into the ground, while Dan set to work with the spade. They worked in silence, Ralph wondering what he would

find, Dan thinking his master had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

The fork struck the box, and Ralph paused.

"Hand me the spade," he said to Dan, who passed it over to him.

He shovelled the earth away until the top of the box was quite clear ; then to his surprise, amazement, and alarm, he saw the lid had been forced, and that the nails were loose. With trembling hands he raised part of the lid. The body was there, to all appearances, just as they left it, and there was very little alteration in the features.

"Someone has found out the grave," said Ralph, "and the lid has been forced open."

Old Dan turned pale, and his limbs shook under him. This was the worst of all. Who could have discovered their secret?

"I knew there would be trouble over it," he stammered. "Oh, Mr Ralph, why did you do it?"

"Hold your tongue," said Ralph angrily. "We have done no wrong, and therefore have nothing to fear. The same mysterious man who took your note has discovered this place, but what prompted him to dig out the grave and open the coffin is more than I can tell."

"Are you quite sure it has been forced open?" asked Dan.

"It must have been ; we nailed it down tight."

"Perhaps the moist earth has caused the wood to rot."

"No, it is quite sound," said Ralph, feeling the box.

They filled in the hole again, treading the earth down firm from time to time.

They would have been still more uneasy had they known a man had watched their proceedings intently, with a self-satisfied smile upon his face. He watched them enter the house, and then walked quickly away in the direction of St. Arvans.

He was a curious-looking man, tall and well-built, with dark eyes and complexion, and his mouth almost hidden by his black moustache. The pace at which he walked proved he was no mean pedestrian, and he soon reached St. Arvans. He went to the village inn, refreshed himself, and made a few inquiries of the landlord as to the Raymonds of The Folly, and whether he thought it probable a stranger would be allowed to look over the house and grounds.

The landlord was a loquacious individual, as such persons frequently are, and proceeded to give the family history of the Raymonds, with sundry embellishments of his own, although, had he known the truth about them, his story would have been far more startling.

The visitor listened attentively, but was anxious to come down to a more recent date. He knew, however, the best way to gain his ends was to give the landlord full scope, for the stopping of his story would probably mean the closing of his mouth.

"That's about all I know of them," said Jack Herries; "and it's a curious story, is it not? I've heard it said The Folly's haunted; and no wonder, if all we hear about the Raymonds be true."

"They seem to have been a curious family. You

say The Folly has gone to ruin. How is that? Are any of the family left?"

"There's Ralph Raymond and his sister Rosalind, but they have not been near the place for years. I saw in the paper that Mr. Ralph had come back to England, and was going in for racing. I do not wonder at it; his father was precious fond of it."

"And has he not been down here since his return?"

"No, or I should have heard of it from Dan Cotswold. He's the old fellow in charge there; been in the family for years," said Herries.

"And what of Miss Rosalind?" asked the stranger.

"I've never heard of her since she left home. She was a rum 'un, and no mistake, although I don't believe she was as bad as people tried to make out. She was a fine-looking woman, and had a will of her own. The Raymond blood was uppermost in her, and no mistake," said Herries.

"Are you quite certain Ralph Raymond has not been to The Folly since his return to England?" asked the stranger, with a peculiar smile.

"Sure of it. I'd have been bound to have heard, if such was the case."

"Well, my worthy host, you are mistaken," said the stranger coolly. "If you will take my word for it, he is there now."

Jack Herries laughed as he replied:

"That's a good 'un, sir. Why, you are a stranger in these parts, and I don't suppose you ever saw Ralph Raymond."

"Again you are in error, most worthy dispenser of

liquids. I not only know Ralph Raymond, but I know he is at The Folly ; and if you care to go up there you will see him. Do you know him ?" said the stranger.

"Of course I know him, although it is years since I saw him. I would know him anywhere. If he is at The Folly he has only just arrived there ; but I think I will go up and see for myself. A walk does a man good. Will you go with me ?"

"No, thanks," said the stranger, with a peculiar smile. "When you see him, ask him if he is fond of digging in the garden."

"Eh !" exclaimed Jack Herries, in amazement. "Digging in the garden ? What tomfoolery are you at ? I'd like to see Ralph Raymond digging in the garden," and he laughed heartily.

"No doubt you would. Ask him the question, nevertheless, and see how he looks, and remember the answer he gives you. Good-day to you !" and the stranger left before the astonished Herries could reply.

"He's a mysterious customer," said Herries to himself. "He's 'having' me, that's what he's at. Go up to The Folly to see if Ralph Raymond's there, and ask him if he has been digging in the garden. Oh, dear, no ! not this child."

Jack Herries, however, was filled with curiosity as he thought over all the man had said. There was no reason for him to deceive him. Perhaps he had been to The Folly and seen Ralph—no, that was impossible, for he had asked if he could look over the place. Herries glanced at the clock and thought:

"I can easily walk there and back before dinner. I'll go. If I'm sold, no one will know excepting myself."

He put on his hat, took a stout stick, whistled his dog, and set out for The Folly, saying to himself that he was a fool for his pains, but consoling himself with the thought that he was not the only man who had the bump of curiosity well developed.



## CHAPTER IX

### A STARTLING QUESTION

"THERE is a man coming up the drive," said Ralph.

"It's Jack Herries," said Dan.

"What brings him here?"

"I cannot say; he seldom comes to The Folly. Perhaps he has heard you are here, and is anxious to see you. He knew you before you went away."

"I do not think he knows I am at The Folly," replied Ralph, "although, doubtless, he has heard of my arrival in England. I will keep out of sight, but if he asks for me, you may tell him I am here."

Dan went to meet Herries, who greeted him cordially.

"I am glad to see you," said Dan. "You do not often come to The Folly."

"I have not much time to spare; a man in my line of business is not his own master. I heard Mr. Ralph was here, that's why I came, and I should like to welcome him home."

"Who told you he was here?" said Dan.

"I heard it in a casual way at my place," replied Herries mysteriously. "Is he here, Dan?"

"Yes; but he has not been here long."

"Can I see him?"

"Of course," replied Dan. "Come into the house."

He followed Dan inside, and Ralph Raymond hearing them, came forward and said :

"You see, Herries, I have turned up again, like the proverbial bad shilling."

Jack Herries hardly recognised him as the Ralph Raymond of bygone days ; he had changed in many ways, and his bronzed complexion denoted that he had been much in the open air, beneath a burning sun, and that he had travelled far.

"I suppose you think I am a very different man to the Ralph Raymond you formerly knew?"

"You certainly have altered," said Jack Herries, "but the more I look at you the easier it is to recognise you. There is no mistaking the Raymonds."

Ralph laughed as he replied : "That is what many of my friends tell me."

"You look as though you had roughed it."

"I have roughed it, and in many countries ; most of my life has been spent in the open since I left home."

"Been farming, or squatting, or something?" said Herries.

"All three," replied Ralph, laughing.

"Then I suppose you were digging in the garden just to keep your hand in?" said Herries.

The effect of this simple remark had an extraordinary effect on Dan Cotswold, and it startled Ralph, although he concealed his surprise by an effort of self-control which did him credit.

Jack Herries noticed the effect his query produced, and stared at Dan in amazement.

The old man staggered back, his face as white as a sheet, and there was no mistaking the fear in his eyes.

Ralph caught him roughly by the arm, and said :

"What ails you, man? There are no ghosts about in the day-time."

Then by way of explanation, he said to Jack Herries :

"Dan's nerves have been upset of late. He fancies he hears mysterious sounds in the house at night, and he has discovered what he is pleased to call a Raymond's ghost. He is getting on in years, and his nerves are not what they were some time back ; it is not to be wondered at, living in such a desolate place as The Folly."

Jack Herries accepted this plausible explanation, although he wondered what his question had to do with Dan's state of mind, and why it agitated him. He had also seen Ralph's startled look, which he quickly suppressed.

"I have often thought it must be lonesome for him to live here alone," he replied, "but he never seemed to mind it."

"I asked him to have someone to live with him, but he refused," said Ralph. "He said he preferred being alone."

"Were you digging in the garden?" asked Herries, anxious to find out how much of the stranger's story was true.

"Dan and I were certainly digging," said Ralph ; "there is plenty of scope for work in the garden."

"So there is," replied Herries, looking through the window at the sad neglect.

"How came you to know I was here, and stranger still, to learn how I occupied my time?" asked Ralph.

"A stranger called at The Arms this morning, and asked me a lot of questions about The Folly. I gave him as much of the history of the place as I knew, and he seemed interested. He questioned me as to whether any of your family were alive, and I told him yourself and Miss Rosalind, but that I had not seen either of you for many years. He then asked me if he could look over the place, and I invited him to walk here with me, but he declined. He rather astonished me when he said you were at The Folly, and that you had been digging in the garden."

"What kind of a man was he?" asked Ralph.

"A tall, well-built dark man, with a black moustache, and piercing dark eyes. I did not like his countenance, there seemed something cunning and devilish about it. He's not a man I would trust, although he talked glibly, and was affable," said Herries.

"As he knew I was here, and what I was doing, he must have been lurking about the place," said Ralph.

"He put his question in a curious way, too," continued Herries. "He said, 'Ask him if he has been digging in the garden, see how he looks, and remember the answer he gives you.'"

Ralph Raymond was perturbed as this curious question, and small wonder at it.

The stranger must have watched him at work

opening the grave, and evidently knew of the happenings at The Folly, or he would not have put his question through Jack Herries, in such a manner.

"And now that you have put the question, watched me, and heard my answer, what conclusion have you arrived at?" asked Ralph.

Jack Herries felt at a loss for a reply.

"Come," said Ralph, "your candid opinion?"

"It appears to me the stranger thought you were not digging in the garden merely to cultivate the soil. Perhaps he fancied you had something hidden there, and now that you had returned home were anxious to see if it were safe. Dan seemed upset at my story, or at something else. The Raymonds have always acted differently to other people, and I have no doubt you had very good reasons for your proceedings," replied Herries.

"You may rest assured I had, or I would not have gone to so much trouble," said Ralph. "You are right in your surmise, Herries; there was something hidden in the garden, and as there have been mysterious sounds in the house at night, and one or two things are missing, I thought it better to unearth what I required before it fell into the hands of strangers. We had some rare old family plate when my father died. You know how he died, and that he was deeply in debt. To secure the plate from the creditors, I hid it away in the grounds."

Dan looked wonderingly at Ralph. He was aware that after Richard Raymond's death the family plate mysteriously disappeared, for which he was devoutly thankful, but he never heard what became of it. He

commenced to think Ralph was speaking the truth, and that the silver lay buried in the grounds.

Jack Herries was interested ; he understood now why Ralph and Dan had been so hard at work ; but he was still in the dark as to the stranger's motive for acting the spy.

"Did you find it?" he asked.

"I am sorry to say we have not found it at present," replied Ralph. "It is several years since I left home, and the garden, as you see, is quite a wilderness, and many well-known marks and signs have been obliterated. We dug deep down at the place where I thought the chest lay, but we failed to find it. However, we are going to have another search to-morrow."

"When I hope you will be more successful," replied Herries.

"I trust so, but it will be a long and arduous task," said Ralph.

"Can I help you in any way?" asked Jack Herries.

"No, thank you all the same ; it would not be fair to take you away from your work."

"But I can spare you one of my men, and he would do some of the rougher part of the work," said Herries.

"I am very much obliged to you," replied Ralph. "I know you can be trusted not to mention what I have told you, but with one of your men it would be different ; he might make remarks which it would be inconvenient for me to answer if questioned."

Jack Herries acknowledged the force of this assertion, and again pressed his own services, which

Ralph quietly declined. Herries had already remained longer than he intended, and took his departure, saying he would be glad to hear Ralph had been successful in his search.

"If you see anything more of this stranger, let me know," said Ralph.

Jack Herries promised to do so, and said :

"If he returns to The Arms I will send for you, but I hardly think it likely he will come back."

"My old friend, you nearly got us into a mess," said Ralph kindly to Dan, when Jack Herries left. "I am not surprised at your being startled; I was upset, but I managed to pull myself together, and conceal my feelings. We have been watched, spied upon, and no doubt by the man I wish to track down. He is supposed to be abroad, but he has probably put the rumour about to conceal his plans. We must be careful, Dan. I am afraid you will have to help me in a very unpleasant task."

"Yes," said Dan wearily, "what is it?"

"The body must be removed. The man who watched our movements knows it is there; he made the discovery, how or when I cannot understand, but I have no doubt my surmise is correct. Such being the case, he may denounce me to shield himself, and we must prevent that at all hazards."

"I feared it, I feared it!" moaned Dan. "It would be terrible if you were suspected of the murder of your sister."

Ralph shuddered at the thought, and replied :

"What I have done is for the best, according to my idea, and I am innocent of any crime, without it

be a crime to bury her down there," and he pointed to the spot.

"It may not be a crime," said Dan, "but it is an unlawful act. You ought to have taken my advice, and placed the business in the hands of the police."

"And let the law take its course with the man I seek. No, Dan ; a thousand times no. I must deal with him when the time comes. He might escape from the meshes of the law ; he cannot escape my vengeance. I have lived in countries, Dan, where blood feuds are rife, and where men take the law into their own hands. I have seen justice so travestied that it became a byword and a scorn to honest, rough, but great-hearted men, who determined to deal it out fairly for themselves. I have been where the knife and revolver were ever ready to avenge insult and outrage, where men protected their women from injury, and fought for the safety of their little ones. I should condemn myself as a coward if I failed to avenge my sister's death. To me that task is a sacred duty. I may be wrong according to the law, but I am right before the judge I respect and honour—my conscience.

"You, old friend, know I am not as other men. Sometimes I think my mind was warped at the time of my father's tragic death, and that it moves in a different groove to that of ordinary men. I am sane enough," he added, as Dan protested, "you need have no fear of that ; but I have my father's blood in me, and you know the man he was."

"Ay, I know full well," replied Dan, "and I understand what you mean."



## CHAPTER X

### THE EMPTY CHEST

"THERE is no occasion for me to explain further," said Ralph. "I know you understand me, and although you blame me for what I have done, I still have your sympathy."

"You are always sure of that, and of such help as an old man can render you," replied Dan. "You are more like your father than I thought. He was not a bad man, but he did rash, dangerous deeds. He never thought of their consequences, and he brought trouble upon himself and his house. You will try and control yourself, Mr. Ralph, will you not? I am only a poor, humble, untaught old man, but listen to my words, and keep a strong hand over yourself."

Ralph knew he was in earnest, and smiling rather sadly, said :

"I will try, Dan, I will try ; but when I meet that man face to face, knowing without a doubt he is guilty, there will be a heavy reckoning for him."

"I pray you come to no harm," said Dan. "It is dangerous work, and you may be hunting a desperate man."

"So much the better," replied Ralph. "There will be more satisfaction in ridding the world of the

scoundrel. I should like to hear his story before he died."

"You will kill him?" asked Dan.

"If I know him to be guilty, yes; but he shall have a chance to prove the evidence against him in my possession is untrue."

Next day Ralph searched in the garden for the spot where he had buried the silver plate. It was difficult to find, but he had a vivid recollection of the night he hid it, and the spot in which it lay. Only one other person knew of the hiding-place, and that was his sister Rosalind, who had helped him to carry it from the house. They had agreed between them that if one heard of the other's death the survivor could do what he, or she, willed with the silver. Rosalind was dead, and Ralph had no compunction in taking it from its hiding-place. He had not done so before, being too much occupied with other matters, and feeling it was safer there than elsewhere.

It was his intention to remove the case containing the silver, and when this was done, to place his sister's remains there. This would save time and labour, and effect the object he had in view.

"It ought to be here," said Ralph, as he stood in a rather thickly wooded part of the grounds. "It was thirty yards from this old oak, in a straight line."

He measured the distance in his stride, and taking off his coat, set to work.

"Keep a sharp look-out, and see there are no prowlers about," he said. "If you examine the bushes round here while I work, it will be safer. I can

easily do it myself; my arms are more accustomed to it than yours."

Dan did as requested, and Ralph kept steadily on at his work. He trusted he had made no mistake as to the exact spot, for he recollected the depth was considerable. It occurred to him that the ground turned up somewhat easily, but he paid little attention to this.

After over an hour's hard work he rested for a time, and then recommenced his laborious task.

Thud!

The spade struck a solid substance, and jarred his hands.

"It's here all right," said Ralph; "I thought I had made no mistake."

He redoubled his exertions, and quickly uncovered the lid of the chest. It was screwed down when he placed it there, and with satisfaction he noticed the screws were still fast. It had not been tampered with; indeed, it would have been passing strange had such been the case. He called Dan, and sent him for a screw-driver, sitting down in the hole until he returned.

"You have found it?" said Dan, peering curiously down.

"Yes; and the screws are in, so it must be all right."

"Who placed it there?"

"I did, with Rosalind's help. It was a hard job for us."

He was turning the screws round slowly; they did not appear to be particularly tight.

There were four of them, and as he drew the last out he gave a sigh of relief. He lifted up the lid and found the chest—*empty*!

This second shock, coming, as it did, close upon the discovery that his sister's coffin had been tampered with, completely dumfounded him. He stood looking at the empty chest in bewilderment; and as for Dan, he was so overcome that he had to sit down on the grass, or he would have fallen.

"The devil's in it," he muttered. "There's something not human about it. I'm afraid; it's so fearsome."

When Ralph recovered from his stupor he flung down the cover with an oath, and it clanged on the box. Rage possessed him, and he again swore terrible oaths he would be even with the man who had done these things, for he saw the same hand in all this work. It was not the value of the plate he grieved for, but he saw in it fresh proof that his sister had fallen into the clutches of a scoundrel, who had forced her to take the plate and her diamonds, and had then murdered her. The plate must, however, have been removed some time back, for the condition of the ground and the screws showed this. She must have taken it long before it became necessary to part with her jewels.

Again he looked into the chest, and this time saw a piece of white paper. He picked it up, and found it was a closed envelope, with his name on the outside in faded ink.

Tearing it open, he read the letter which it contained, which ran as follows:

"DEAR RALPH—I am taking the silver plate, and am doing wrong, and wronging you, but I hope you will forgive me, if you ever return and find it gone. I have heard nothing of you for so many years that I believe you must be dead. I do not, however, give this as an excuse for my action. I am sorely in need of money, both for myself and one I love dearly, dearer than life. I think with the money I can raise on this plate I may be able to start fresh in the world. You will, I am sure, believe me when I say only the direst necessity compels me to this act. Dear brother, forgive me. I have been an erring woman, but as I hope for forgiveness, I say I have been more sinned against than sinning. If ever you come home, and find this letter, I can only say, do not seek me out; I am better alone. You could not help me, and I know you well enough to fear you would act rashly, and might get into serious trouble on my account. Therefore I ask you to leave me alone, to blot me out of your memory, to forget you ever had a sister. Ralph, I often think there is a taint of bad blood in our veins, for sometimes I am urged to do violence to my better feelings, which seem to be under the control of all that is bad within me.—Your wayward sister,

"ROSALIND."

This was the letter from the grave, and as Ralph read it his whole body was in a tumult.

Climbing out of the hole, he sat down beside Dan, and read him the letter.

"You'll forgive her the wrong she has done you?" said Dan.

"With all my heart. She was forced to take it, and it is another heavy score the villain has to wipe off to me. She must have been in a terrible fix or she would not have done it. You know she had a strong will. She says it is for one dearer to her than life. He must have had a powerful hold over her. Once she loved, the man who gained her affections would have possession of her whole self. That was her nature, I am sure of it, and he found it out and traded upon it. No wonder you have heard strange noises at The Folly ; it is a mercy you discovered nothing, or you would have probably been put out of the way. Dare you remain here longer ?"

"If you wish it, Mr. Ralph. I will do anything for you, and I have not many years to live ; it matters little where, or how, I die."

"Do not speak in that strain. I'll tell you what I will do. I will look out for a suitable man to live here with you—a young powerful fellow that can be trusted ; there are many such to be found who would be only too willing to take the place."

Dan Cotswold shook his head, and said :

"Better as it is. I am not afraid, and a stranger might pry into secrets it is better we should keep to ourselves."

Ralph made no answer, but he was determined Dan should not remain at The Folly alone longer than he could help.

Their next task was to remove the body, and this they did during the night, lowering it into the large chest where the silver plate had been.

"She little thought, poor soul, when that chest

was emptied she would occupy it herself," said Dan.

"I would like to place the man who wronged her in the place we have taken her from," said Ralph savagely. "Perhaps I may be able to do so some day."

"You'll never do that," said Dan, "it is impossible; but he deserves it, and worse."

"Nothing is impossible when a man is determined to succeed, and has right and justice on his side," replied Ralph.

"I'm none so sure of that," said Dan. "I have lived over threescore year, and seen some strange happenings. You recollect young Samuel Prout who lived at St. Arvans, and had a pretty young wife?"

"Whom he killed in a fit of jealous rage, and suffered for his crime."

"The same, but it came out some years after that he did not kill her. It was the man who persecuted her did it. He confessed his crime on his deathbed to the parson, with a request that he would make it public. Samuel was not guilty, no more was his wife; it was a terrible sad mistake, but the evidence was too strong against him," said Dan.

"It makes one wonder why such things are allowed to come to pass," replied Ralph.

"There's many happenings in this world beyond our understanding," said Dan; "but there must be some reason for them we cannot make out."

Ralph Raymond was glad to leave The Folly, and the mysteries surrounding it, and return to the more

genial and healthy atmosphere of the Bankshire Downs. He was rather uneasy at leaving Dan Cotswold alone, and he wrote a hurried note to Jack Herries asking him to call at The Folly as often as possible, and to report if anything was amiss with Dan.

That was the best he could do for the present, until he found a suitable man to send there.



## CHAPTER XI

### SATELLITE

It was well for Ralph Raymond that he had something to occupy his mind, or he would have lapsed into a morbid, melancholy state, and his health would have suffered. The remembrance of the scenes at The Folly were always vividly before him, or if they vanished for a few hours, they quickly returned.

Mrs. Mersey noticed a change in him, but forbore questioning. She had already found out he was not easily drawn into conversation.

"It's always the same when he goes away for a few days," she thought. "Perhaps he has some trouble in his life and keeps it to himself—most of us have," she added, with a sigh.

The exhilarating air of the Bankshire Downs revived Ralph's spirits, and his horses occupied much of his attention. He constantly rode at exercise, and supervised the stable management generally.

He and Henry Loughton were on excellent terms, and, curious to relate, the rivalry between them was of a friendly nature.

"You have not had a look round my stables yet," said Loughton, when he met Ralph casually on the Downs. "Come over and have dinner with me at The Willows to-morrow evening."

Ralph accepted the invitation; he thought he might learn something more about Francis Kearney and his mode of life. He was thoroughly convinced Kearney was the man who murdered his sister, and although he had not seen him he was sure he would recognise him when they met. A man who had committed such grievous wrongs would betray himself in some way in his presence.

He rode over to The Willows, where Henry Loughton welcomed him.

Loughton's establishment was unpretentious, but comfortable and commodious, and a model of cleanliness.

Mrs. Loughton, a busy little woman with a fresh complexion, a good-humoured face and bright shining hair, was very proud of her husband. They had no children, which was a drawback to their happiness, for the sound of children's voices, their joyous laughter, their wayward moods and pattering little feet, bring comfort to many a home that would otherwise be cheerless.

Annie Loughton would have delighted in motherhood, but it was denied her; she, however, lived in hopes that her wishes would some day be gratified.

She had heard a good deal about Ralph Raymond from her husband, and was anxious to see him. On two or three occasions she had seen Mrs. Kearney, and she at once recognised the likeness between her and Ralph—it was startling the close resemblance, she thought, but she made no remark.

Henry Loughton had not a large stable of horses, but there were several amongst them, he thought,

much above the average, and one of the best was a steeplechaser, the property of Francis Kearney. This horse had not been long in his stable, and was purchased to take the place of Culloden. Kearney's horses had all been transferred to Henry Loughton soon after the death of Mr. Mersey

Satellite was a six-year-old bay horse, and the *beau-ideal* of a chaser. He was purchased for a moderate sum, and under Loughton's care had grown into a fine animal. It was the trainer's instructions to specially prepare him for the grand steeplechase at Auteuil, a race Kearney was anxious to win, and in which he proposed to ride the horse. This was Henry Loughton's sore point; he knew the difficult nature of the Auteuil course, and Francis Kearney, although a very good horseman, and the rider of several winners, had never been over such a stiff country as the famous French course. The trainer, however, knew it was of no use trying to dissuade him from the task; the only thing was to get the horse as fit as possible, and trust to luck.

Ralph Raymond quickly picked out Satellite as a good one, and when he heard he was Francis Kearney's property he was still more interested in him.

"Where did he buy him?" asked Ralph.

"In Ireland, but I forget from whom; I know he was a good bargain."

"He seems to be getting fit. When are you going to run him? There are no steeplechases until next back end."

"The big race at Auteuil is the one I have

instructions to prepare him for. It is a valuable stake, and there are always good entries."

"Have you ever been there?" asked Ralph.

"Several times."

"What sort of a course is it?"

"Rather dangerous, but a very charming place. The big water-jump in front of the Stand is the one to bring horses down, and they go over it three or four times," said Loughton.

"So Mr. Kearney fancies Satellite has a chance?"

"Yes; but I think his chance would be much better if he did not ride the horse," replied Loughton.

"He intends riding him!" exclaimed Ralph, surprised.

"Yes, more's the pity. It is not the sort of course for gentlemen riders to negotiate successfully," said the trainer.

Ralph smiled as he said:

"I am in the professional events. Do you think it would be safe for me to ride in that race?"

"After your win on Fearless at Kempton, most decidedly I say 'Yes.' That was a very fine bit of work you put in."

"I am glad you think so," answered Ralph. "Is Satellite better than Culloden?"

Henry Loughton did not at once reply, and Ralph said quickly:

"Perhaps I ought not to have put that question to you; do not answer it if you feel indisposed to do so."

"Not at all," laughed Loughton. "I was thinking what answer I should give; it is rather a difficult

question. Over hurdles at Kempton, I think Culloden would prove the better of the pair, but at Auteuil Satellite would have more chance."

"Then he must be a really good horse, for I thought Culloden would appear to greater advantage over a steeplechase course. I may be mistaken, but such is my opinion."

Ralph spent an agreeable evening with his host and hostess.

Henry Loughton's conversational powers were of no mean order, and his wife chatted merrily, her speech corresponding with her looks.

"You seldom see Mr. Kearney, I think you told me?" said Ralph, after a pause.

"He comes by fits and starts. Sometimes he is here regularly for two or three weeks, at others he will remain away for months. I generally win more races for him when he does not interfere."

"Henry thinks his judgment is much superior to Mr. Kearney's," said his wife, smiling.

"And what do you think, Mrs. Loughton?"

"Of course I agree with him; it is better for me to do so," she replied.

"You agree with me because you know I am right," retorted her husband.

"Did you know Mrs. Kearney?" asked Ralph.

"Yes, and do you know, you bear a strong resemblance to her," replied Mrs. Loughton.

Ralph had become accustomed to this, and he expected the answer he received.

"I have frequently been told so," he said.  
"Curious, is it not?"

"Very, especially as you are not related in any way," she replied. "Mrs. Kearney did not seem a particularly happy woman, but of course I knew very little of her, and I have not seen her for a long time ; Mr. Kearney always comes alone now."

As Ralph rode across the Downs to his home, he wondered when it would be his good fortune to meet this Francis Kearney. He meant to be cautious, and try in some way to make the man condemn himself out of his own mouth. This would be difficult, but the mere fact of obstacles being in his way made him more eager and determined to bring his plans to a successful issue.

Kearney had made up his mind to win at Auteuil, had he ; well, it would be his (Ralph's) business to endeavour to thwart his ambition. Had he anything in his stable good enough to enter ? was the question he asked himself.

He decided he had not, and it would be difficult to buy a horse capable of defeating Satellite.

When he arrived at Heath House he sat down in an easy-chair, lit his pipe, and tried to devise some means by which Satellite's colours could be lowered.

Francis Kearney was to ride the horse, and Ralph was determined, if possible, to obtain a mount in the race. He was in the professional ranks, and therefore, after his riding of Fearless at Kempton, he ought to stand a good chance of securing an engagement. There would not be much difficulty about it, he thought ; but he wanted a good mount—one that would beat Satellite.

"By Jove, that's it !" he exclaimed, as an idea

occurred to him. "I'll run up to town in the morning, and try and see him."

It was Colonel Ilford he meant to see, in order to try and persuade him to enter Culloden, and give him the mount. The horse had been beaten at Kempton, and that would take some weight off, and it would be a splendid thing to beat Kearney with *his own horse*, Culloden only being leased to the Colonel. The question was, when did the lease expire?

Colonel Ilford informed him that it was for twelve months, so that in all probability it would be close upon expiring. The Steeplechase would be run early in June, and it all depended when the lease ended.

Ralph Raymond was feverishly anxious to reach London and see the Colonel. He was up early next morning, and hurried off to catch the first train from Buntontown, leaving his breakfast almost untouched, much to the dismay of Mrs. Mersey.

"You've hardly eaten anything, sir," she said reproachfully. "Is it not to your liking?"

"Everything you do is to my liking, Mrs. Mersey."

"Do have a bit of something, sir. Never travel on an empty stomach."

"My good woman, I am going to travel on the train; never mind my stomach," said Ralph, as he hurried out of the hall.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Mersey. "Was there ever such a man! He does everything by fits and starts. I do wish he'd had a bite before he left."

She looked at the cutlets so nicely browned, glanced at the tomatoes and the chipped potatoes,

and sitting down in the chair Ralph ought to have occupied, commenced to eat the neglected meal with a hearty appetite.

"It's a sin to waste it," she said, as she helped herself to a second cutlet.

Meanwhile, Ralph Raymond drove to the station to catch the early London train, utterly oblivious to the fact that Mrs. Mersey was thoroughly enjoying his neglected breakfast. Had he known he would merely have laughed, and agreed with her remark that it would be a sin to waste it. He had more important matters to occupy his mind, and all he wished was that Colonel Ilford would be found at his club, and that the lease of Culloden would not terminate before the Grand Steeplechase de Paris.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE COLONEL AGREES

WHEN Ralph arrived in London he thought he had been in too much of a hurry. He might just as well have remained to eat his neglected breakfast, for he found he had some considerable time to spare before there was any probability of finding Colonel Ilford at his club. The railway station was thronged with business men arriving by the suburban trains, and hurrying off to their various occupations. A stream of human life was pouring into the vast city, and Ralph, occupied as his thoughts were with other matters, could not help observing it. Train after train arrived, and vomited forth its living freight. The many thousands of men and women were all in a hurry. They darted out of the carriages before the train pulled up, and ran along the platform with undignified speed. They jostled and elbowed each other, each man striving to outdo another by a fraction of a minute.

It was a curious sight to Ralph, for he had during the greater part of his life lived apart from cities, and dwelt in comparative loneliness in the bush, and the wild wastes of foreign lands. He wondered if it was absolutely necessary for all these people to be in such a desperate hurry; was there any occasion

for it? He thought of his own eagerness to reach London that morning, and how he had hurried away hours too soon, with no other result than to loiter about the city and wait. Killing time is far more tedious than working steadily for some hours at a stretch. Time flies for the busy man; it dawdles along tantalisingly for the idler.

Ralph was no idler, and waiting for time to pass was foreign to him. He followed the crowd into the streets, where he saw it swallowed up in the vast seething cauldron of mighty London. How quickly the people vanished. A man brushed past him and in a few moments disappeared, where to, Ralph had no idea. 'Buses and cabs hurried away with their complement of passengers. A huge crowd of black-coated, top-hatted men disappeared from view, as it seemed, into the bowels of the earth. They were travelling by the underground, and would presently emerge from their hiding-place in another funereal stream. It was all intensely interesting had he been in the mood for it, but he was not, and yet he scanned the faces of many men, thinking of and picturing the features of Francis Kearney, as he delineated them in his mind.

Somewhere he had read that the top of a 'bus was the best place to see London from. He mounted one without inquiring its destination. He had three hours to spare, and therefore it mattered little.

"Where are you bound for?" he asked the conductor, who stared at him much in the same way as he would have looked at a curiosity of the animal world in the Zoo.

"You want to know where we're a-goin'?"

"Yes."

"It would take me a good long time to tell you. There's enough names on this 'ere 'bus to make a hundred pounds prize competition—find the missing word, and so on."

Ralph was amused.

"Do you go anywhere near Charing Cross?"

"I reckon we do, and a precious sight farther."

"That will do me," said Ralph, and took the ticket handed to him.

There was a block at the Bank, of course, and Ralph beheld that wonderful conglomeration of vehicles and pedestrians which still astonishes sight-seers from all parts of the world.

At Charing Cross he alighted, and wandered about until he had no longer patience to remain away from the club he knew the Colonel frequented.

In answer to his inquiry, he met with the expected answer that he had not arrived.

"Colonel Ilford generally comes in about half-past twelve," said an attendant. "Will you wait for him?"

"Thank you," replied Ralph, and entered the reading-room. Here he found a plentiful supply of morning papers, and as he had not seen one, he commenced to turn them over.

"Entries for the Grand Steeplechase de Paris, better known here as the Auteuil Steeplechase, or French Grand National, close to-morrow at 4 p.m. English owners can enter up to that time by telegram," he read.

"Here's luck!" thought Ralph. "I might have

been too late. Now, if I can only see Colonel Ilford, and persuade him over to my way of thinking, all will be well. I shall have not only a mount, but one with a winning chance; I am certain of that."

He glanced at the clock, and saw it wanted but a few minutes to half-past twelve.

With soldierly punctuality, the Colonel entered the room at his accustomed time. Ralph's card had evidently been handed to him, for he looked round in search of someone.

Ralph Raymond rose from his seat and went towards him, and the Colonel, recognising him, at once came forward.

"Glad to see you," he said, in his sharp way. "What can I do for you?"

"Can you give me half-an-hour's quiet conversation?" asked Ralph.

"Certainly; come with me," and he led the way into a room evidently used for such purposes, for there were only two others in it, and they were in earnest conversation.

"It is about a racing matter I wish to speak to you," said Ralph, smiling.

"I guessed as much," replied Colonel Ilford. "It is a subject that will be of mutual interest."

"May I ask when your lease of Culloden expires?" asked Ralph.

Colonel Ilford took a neat pocket-book out of his coat, and turned to a lettered memorandum book. He was methodical, and always kept an account of such transactions.

"Ah! here we have it," he said. "Culloden leased

from Francis Kcarney for twelve months from June 9, 19— to June 9, 19—, both dates inclusive, for the sum of—well, I need not mention that," he added, with a smile.

"That's very remarkable," said Ralph.

"What is remarkable, my young friend?"

Colonel Ilford had a pleasant habit of alluding to men almost as old as himself in this manner. It sounded cheerful, and it did no harm; in many instances "my young friend" felt flattered.

"The big steeplechase at Auteuil is run on the 8th of June, the day before your lease expires."

"Well, what of that?" exclaimed the Colonel, somewhat bewildered.

"The entries close at four o'clock to-morrow," said Ralph.

"Please go on; I am entirely in the dark," said the Colonel.

"What do you think of my riding?" was Ralph's next question.

"After you beat me on Fearless, it is needless to say I have a fairly high estimate of your capabilities," said the Colonel, smiling.

"Would you trust me to ride Culloden for you?"

"Most decidedly," was the emphatic reply.

"I think him a better steeplechaser than he is a hurdle racer."

"You have never seen him over big fences."

"No; but I judged by the way he jumped at Kempton. Do you know why he lost that race?"

"Because Fearless was better at the weights," replied the Colonel.

"That is not the only reason ; the main reason, I think, is because he over-jumped himself ; he seemed to me to imagine he was steeplechasing," said Ralph.

"That is feasible," replied Colonel Ilford ; "but what are you driving at ?"

"Enter Culloden for the Steeplechase at Auteuil, and let me ride him. It is a big prize, close on five thousand pounds, and to pull such a great race off, the day before your lease expires, would be a splendid achievement, Colonel. Do you agree with me ?"

Colonel Ilford's face during the time Ralph was speaking was a study. A gleam came into his eyes, such a flash of light as men had seen in his moments of victory. He literally beamed upon Ralph, and when he finished speaking, Colonel Ilford held out his hand, and clenching Ralph's in a firm grip, said :

"My boy, you are a wonder ! It is a master-stroke of genius. I should never have thought of it. Is it your own idea—entirely your own idea ?"

"Yes," replied Ralph. "I thought of it last night after paying a visit to Henry Loughton's stables. I saw a horse there named Satellite, who was bought by Francis Kearney in order to win this particular race."

"Oh !" said the Colonel, rubbing his hands. "That's good—excellent ! Go on !"

"It occurred to me that Culloden was about the equal of Satellite, although Loughton thinks not, over a steeplechase course. I have heard a lot about Kearney's prowess in the saddle, and I am anxious to test my skill against his."

"How can you do so in this case?" asked the Colonel.

"Francis Kearney intends to ride Satellite," said Ralph.

"God bless my soul, you don't say so!" said the Colonel, startled out of his usual decorum, and lapsing into a state of phraseology unusual with him.

"Loughton informed me such was the case, and I rather fancy he would prefer to see a good professional up."

"No doubt! Quite proper of Loughton; he's no fool. Let me tell you, my young friend, that you are pounds better than Kearney, and over such a course as Auteuil I hardly know how much you could give him. Do you know him?"

"No," replied Ralph; "I do not know him, but I am anxious to meet him—in the saddle."

"He's a bad lot," said Colonel Ilford. "I am afraid he is a bad lot. Gad, sir, if it is only a case of Culloden beating Satellite, we have won the race, but there are some very good horses in France. Auteuil! Paris! My young friend, they bring back memories. Paris! I love the gay city. I have had some good times there in my younger days," said the Colonel, with a quiet chuckle. "It will do me good to visit Paris again. We'll do it. I say we'll do it. Damme, sir, I say we'll do it," and the delighted Colonel dashed his hand down upon the bell on the table with such force that it startled the other two occupants of the room to such an extent that they glared and scowled in the gallant soldier's direction for some minutes.

A waiter hurried in at the unaccustomed furiousness of the signal, and seeing the Colonel, saluted.

"Harvey, bring me a bottle of champagne. I say we'll do it, Harvey, and when I say a thing I mean it," said the Colonel.

"You do, Colonel. I knows it," said Harvey, as he wheeled round with military precision, and marched out of the room.

"Been in one or two tight fixes with me in India," said the Colonel, alluding to Harvey.

Ralph smiled as he thought: "And both of you came out of them well."

"Then it's settled," said Ralph. "I ride Culloden in the Auteuil Steeplechase?"

"You do, my young friend. Oh, here's the champagne!"

The wine foamed and sparkled in the glasses, bubbling up from the hollow stems.

"To the success of Culloden," said the Colonel.

"And Colonel Ilford's colours," said Ralph.

"And Ralph Raymond's ride," replied the Colonel, with a courteous inclination of the head.

"The horse must be entered at once," said Ralph.

"I will wire now, so that there will be no delay, and say letter following, confirming."

"Very good," replied Ralph. "Shall I act as secretary?"

"I am obliged to you," said the Colonel.

Ralph went to a desk, wrote out the telegram and the letter, and handed them to Colonel Ilford to sign, which he did in a fine bold hand that would have done credit to a far younger man.



## CHAPTER XIII

### HALF THE STAKE

THE telegram and letter having been despatched to the post office, Colonel Ilford said :

"I wonder if I can possibly see Satellite? Do you think it would be quite fair?"

"Certainly, provided Loughton has no objections," replied Ralph

"If I see the horse I can form my own opinion as to the chance we have of beating him."

"You had better return with me to Buntontown to-night," said Ralph.

"Is that your station? I have been there many years ago."

"It is not far from Heath House, where I live; a nice drive over the Downs. I am sure you will enjoy it. You will have to make the most of a bachelor's quarters and a loquacious lady, my housekeeper, Mrs. Mersey, the widow of a man who formerly trained for Kearney."

"Mersey—yes, I recollect him; and I rather fear he lost more than he gained by training his horses."

"So his widow says," replied Ralph. "It is rather a sore point with her."

"And a topic of conversation to be avoided."

"By no means ; she is rather partial to airing her grievances," laughed Ralph.

"I will accept your hospitality," said Colonel Ilford. "It is very kind of you to offer to put me up. I am a crotchety old man."

Ralph laughed as he replied: "Then you belie your looks, and my judgment is at fault."

Colonel Ilford liked Ralph Raymond, and as he looked at him he thought: "There is a good deal of his father about him, but I think travel and experience have turned him into a more reliable man."

"It is my turn to send a telegram," said Ralph. "Mrs. Mersey must be informed you are coming, or she will never forgive me. She prides herself on her knowledge of cookery, and really she has a very good idea of it. I am sure Loughton will be glad to see you, and I can send a boy over from the house to let him know we are going to pay him a visit."

In the evening Colonel Ilford accompanied Ralph to Buntontown, and he thoroughly enjoyed the invigorating air of the Downs as they drove to Heath House.

"This is splendid!" said the Colonel, expanding his chest and inhaling the freshness. "No wonder you look strong and well; it is a rare place to keep a man fit; just like a visit to Simla in the hot weather. Have you ever been in India?"

"No," replied Ralph; "but I have been in the North of Queensland, which, I should say, is quite as hot."

"My dear boy, India is—well, you know what."

"And Northern Queensland is the hottest part of it," laughed Ralph.

"We will not dispute about it. It is sufficient to know we have come unscathed out of the burning fiery furnace," replied the Colonel.

When Mrs. Mersey received Ralph's telegram she exclaimed:

"Well, I never! and I suppose he expects me to have half-a-dozen courses ready, and no place nearer than Bunton to get anything, and not much choice there. Men have no sense in these matters. I will do my best, and they will have to put up with it."

They did "put up with it," and the Colonel delighted the worthy woman by praising her dishes, and vowing he had not had a more enjoyable dinner for months.

"It beats all our club cookery hollow," he said. "I assure you it does, Mrs. Mersey. I shall try and persuade the Committee to secure your services."

"I shall have a word to say about that," laughed Ralph. "You are not going to run away with her if I know it."

"It is not at all unlikely that someone will run away with her one of these days," said the Colonel, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Mrs. Mersey blushed, and with a "How can you say such things, sir!" delightedly fussed out of the room.

"She will think well of you for evermore," said Ralph, with a hearty laugh.

"Vanity, thy name is woman," said the Colonel.

Ralph sent a lad over to The Willows as soon as

he arrived home, and before they had finished dining returned with an answer that Henry Loughton would be pleased to see them next morning after the horses had been exercised.

"Capital!" said Colonel Ilford. "We had better tell him Culloden is entered."

"Certainly," said Ralph. "I do not think he will be much surprised."

"It takes a lot to surprise a trainer," laughed the Colonel.

"Are we such a very bad lot?" asked Ralph, smiling.

"By no means! My experience is that trainers are a very straightforward body of men, and carry out their grave responsibilities in a very creditable manner. I have been thinking if you are to ride Culloden in the Steeplechase you had better have him here to train. You can then ride him yourself, and you will become accustomed to each other. The more a horse and a rider are acquainted before a race the better," said Colonel Ilford.

Ralph agreed with him, but said he had no desire to take the horse away from his present trainer.

"He will not mind it at all; in fact, I think he will be glad to lose him. He is not partial to jumpers."

"Then there will be no difficulty in the way, and no jealousy," said Ralph. "When will you send him over?"

"As soon as I return to town I will give the necessary instructions for the transfer, and explain the reason."

Colonel Ilford was out in the early morning on the Downs with Ralph, and became much interested in the work of the horses.

Ralph soon discovered that he was a good judge, and his remarks showed a close acquaintance with racing generally.

"That is Fearless, is it not?" he asked, as the bay mare came dashing past. "I ought to remember her after her defeat of Culloden. How well she moves; very fine action indeed, and she seems fairly fit."

"I am going to run her at Ascot in the Stakes," said Ralph. "She is a grand stayer, and although she is a hurdle racer, she has pace enough for most flat racers."

"It is a bold move, but it is the bold moves that generally bring success. I think you are acting wisely; she is a very fine mare indeed."

After breakfast they rode to The Willows.

"Glad to see you, Colonel Ilford," said Loughton. "It is an unexpected pleasure. I had no idea you knew Mr. Raymond."

"I knew his father, and was pleased to make the acquaintance of his son," said the Colonel. "I think it will be the most straightforward way to tell you the principal reason of my visit. I have entered Culloden for the Auteuil Steeplechase, and as Satellite is also entered, and Mr. Raymond says he is a good horse, I thought, with your permission, I would like to see him. Have you any objections?"

"None whatever, Colonel," replied the trainer

heartily. "So you have entered Culloden! I thought the lease was up before then."

"Not until the day after," said the Colonel.

"That is strange," said Loughton.

"It will be stranger if he wins," said Ralph.

Loughton smiled as he replied :

"I expect you asked my opinion as to the merits of Culloden and Satellite in order to see if it was worth while to enter him."

"Such a thought had not occurred to me at the time," replied Ralph, "although it did afterwards, and I advised Colonel Ilford to enter him."

"You know my opinion of them," said Loughton. "I think our horse will certainly beat Culloden over such a course as Auteuil. But come and look at him, Colonel, and then you can form your own opinion."

Satellite was a quiet horse in his box, although inclined to be fractious at exercise. He looked round at his visitors, and then resumed his feed. Colonel Ilford noted his good points, and failed to find any bad. He felt him carefully from head to foot, and then stood back, glancing at him admiringly.

"He is a very handsome horse," he said. "I have seldom seen a better topped one, and his legs are as sound as brass. Yes, Loughton, he is a good one, I am sure, and Culloden will have a difficult task to beat him. Do you think he is quite as big as Culloden?"

"Not quite," replied the trainer, "but he is more compact; not quite so loosely built. They are both

good horses, but if I had my pick I should take Satellite."

"Where did Kearney get him from?" asked Colonel Ilford.

"He bought him in Ireland. A rare country for jumpers," he replied.

They remained some time at The Willows, and then rode back to Heath House.

"I have had a most enjoyable visit," said the Colonel, as he sat beside Ralph in the dog-cart.

"You must run down whenever you feel inclined. I shall always be delighted to see you," replied Ralph.

"I shall probably take you at your word before long."

"Do, Colonel; the sooner the better."

After a few minutes' silence, Colonel Ilford said: "Satellite is a grand horse, but we shall beat him."

"I hope so," replied Ralph.

"He may be a shade better than Culloden, but you are so much ahead of Kearney that it will more than make up the difference."

"You have faith in me?"

"I have, my boy; and if you win you shall have half the stake."

"I cannot accept such an offer," replied Ralph. "It is too generous, especially when I asked you to run him merely that I might have a good mount, and a chance of beating Kearney. Really, I cannot accept it. I am already indebted to you for granting my somewhat selfish request."

"You look at the matter in the wrong light,"

replied Colonel Ilford. "Recollect if it had not been for you the horse would not have been entered, and I should have had no chance of landing a good stake. No, Raymond, the obligation is all on my side, and you must accept my offer."

"Still, I must decline; it is not a fair bargain."

"Then if you do not accept, I will not run him," snapped Colonel Ilford.

"In that case I am forced to accept," said Ralph. "I hope I may be able to do you a service some day in return."

"You are rendering me the best possible service by riding the horse. It is a difficult matter to obtain a good jockey, especially over such a course. Have you been to Auteuil?"

"Yes; but I have not ridden over the course."

"I think you had better walk over it two or three times before the race; it is rather tricky, and you will be able to judge which is the best way to ride."

"I will take your advice," replied Ralph. "It is always an advantage to know a course well."

They parted at the station, and Ralph felt somewhat lonely as he returned home.

He felt that in Colonel Ilford he had found a genuine friend, and a man who would stand by him in case he had trouble with Francis Kearney. The Colonel would not shrink from defending any man he called friend. Ralph knew there was danger ahead, and that the game he was playing was fraught with peril. If Kearney suspected—or more, had knowledge—that his crime was known, he would not stick at trifles in order to save himself.



"I have proved myself a match, and more than a match, for men such as he," thought Ralph, "and he shall not escape me unless he kills me first."

Culloden arrived safely at Heath House, and there was a chorus of approval from the stable lads when they saw him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### "THE PLAY'S THE THING"

THE stranger who had given Jack Herries the information that Ralph Raymond had been digging in the garden at The Folly left St. Arvans, and proceeded direct to London. The following morning he caught the nine o'clock Dover Calais express at Charing Cross, taking a ticket to Paris, Nord. He was evidently accustomed to travelling; such men are easily distinguishable from the ordinary tourist or occasional pleasure-seeker. The porters recognised him, and looked at him curiously. He was a man who had at various times been connected with some exceedingly clever business in criminal cases. He was not a member of the police force, nor had he been in the service; he was not a private inquiry agent, but nevertheless he had been employed on some very mysterious cases.

Criminal cases had a fascination for the man, seized hold upon him, and held him in their grip. He was as keen on the scent of a clever criminal as a blood-hound on the track of a runaway.

When quite a lad at school he got into scrapes innumerable owing to his partiality for blood-curdling stories, and it was generally a sure find to look under

the mattress of his bed for reading matter of this nature. Successive masters tried to knock it out of him, but all to no purpose ; he clung as tenaciously as an octopus to his absorbing and morbid pleasure—the working out of criminal cases.

His father, finding threats of no avail, left him to his own devices ; and strange to say, he did not develop bad habits. On the contrary, he was an obedient son, and his father confessed he could find no fault with his conduct.

“ He will make a fine criminal lawyer,” said a friend. “ Give him a chance.”

His father, being moderately well off, acted upon this advice, and his son proceeded to study for the law, but he soon discovered it was a laborious and uninteresting occupation.

After two years he threw it up, incurring his father's displeasure. About this time a notorious poisoner, who had defied detection for many years, was arrested on unmistakable evidence of his guilt. He was tried, convicted, and hanged. A week or two after the trial a startling announcement appeared in the press to the effect that the conviction of the man was due to the marvellous way in which information had been given to the police by James Hyson, a young man of private means. The account went on to state that Hyson had discovered the real criminal by collecting and reading carefully the accounts of the numerous poisoning cases. “ He has done Society a great service, and deserves some public recognition.” Thus concluded the article.

When James Hyson's father read it he felt proud

of his son, but he said very little to him about the matter. Soon after this the elder Hyson died, leaving James his fortune. He was now at liberty to occupy his time as he thought fit, without any desire or necessity to earn his living.

For some men this state of things would have spelt downfall and ruin; not so with James Hyson. He travelled on the Continent, visiting various gambling centres, and at Monte Carlo he had a rare opportunity of studying human nature in all ranks of life.

The aristocrats amused him. They ought to have known better, but when he saw a duchess and a foreign princess quarrelling over a bet at the pigeon shooting, and nearly coming to blows, he knew they were as ignorant of what Society required of them as the most confirmed *roué* and gambler at the tables.

He had witnessed a count, bearing an ancient and hitherto honourable name, borrowing money from a leviathan of the ring, a big man with a rotund stomach, much jewellery, and an accent of speech which is familiar in the region of Houndsditch. The count thought he was conferring a favour, and the big man evidently accepted it as such. There were many things to interest him. James Hyson was no gambler; he considered it the pastime of fools, and he was right. But it fascinated him to watch people who gambled, and he became as feverishly interested in their good luck, or the reverse, as the players themselves. No thrilling play would have given him as much satisfaction to witness. There was enough and to spare for him in the living reality of the daily dramas enacted before his eyes. And the players played

their rôles well. Their acting differed almost daily, there were no stereotyped movements or gestures, no treading the boards to a particular measure, no posing for effect, no attempt at being natural, and failing miserably. The daily parts in this huge drama varied, and the same actors never played in the same way twice.

James Hyson gloated over the grand saturnalia rolled out before his eyes. It did not lure him to destruction. The faces of the victims sufficed to make him feel the pangs, the despair of defeat ; the faces of the victors proved to him that this unholy gold ruined both body and soul. Day after day, night after night, he frequented the rooms, studying the men and women who played for his amusement. Had he been a magician, the hero of an Eastern fable, the Alladin of Alladins, a Monte Cristo such as Dumas never dreamt of, he could not have commanded a play that would have pleased him like this.

Crime he had studied from boyhood, all sorts of crime and criminals, and he knew the whole of his experience and research had never shown him such a sight. One night, a glorious moonlight night, when the blue waters shone in delicate splendour, when Nature seemed to be silently adoring her Creator, when the balmy air caressingly fanned the luxurious tropical flowers and plants, and the less deserving humanity, James Hyson leaned over the wall and looked towards the sea. He was in a tumult. He had just left the rooms, where play had been higher than usual, where great sums had been lost and won. He had seen the man with "the muck

rake" scooping in the golden shekels with an impassive face, but James Hyson knew that behind that countenance lurked a criminal desire to annihilate the players and "scoop the pool" for himself. He had watched the man with the hawk-like eyes, and had seen behind the mask that hid his soul.

The drama interested him; even the glorious, enchanting scene spread out before him could not lure him away. He turned from heaven and went back towards hell, but halted half-way.

Coming from the rooms he saw a man and a woman. He had seen them many times, but had not given them more than passing attention, there were so many in the crowd to attract. They were excited, and the man gesticulated fiercely. He was a tall man, dark, and somewhat sinister-looking, and in the pale light he seemed Satanic in his appearance.

James Hyson had not seen him apart from the crowd before, and as he looked at him, he fancied he detected a resemblance to himself. Yes, he was positive of it, but he could not bring himself to think his features were quite so baneful.

They were about the same height and build; it was a curious resemblance, and caused James Hyson to think it over seriously.

The lady, he noted, seemed far superior to the man. She was also dark, tall and graceful, with the easy bearing of a well-bred woman, but the shadow of a fast life seemed upon her. They were so deeply engrossed in their conversation that they passed within a few paces of him without seeing him, a tall shrub partially concealing him.

"You have had the plate. I got that for you ; now you want the diamonds."

"And mean to have them," was the man's savage reply.

She made no answer, but gave a gesture of despair.

James Hyson was all alert. Here was a probable tragedy much to his liking.

"You have had the plate. I got that for you ; now you want the diamonds."

"And mean to have them."

She did not look like a female burglar ; the glimpse he caught of her face rather impressed him in her favour.

"She is in that man's hands ; he moulds her to his will," was Hyson's first thought. "He must have wonderful control over her ; she seems a strong-minded woman. Love is at the bottom of it I expect. Hate will follow ; they sometimes go hand in hand. Life is a strange mixture "

He watched them as they leaned over the sea wall, and laughed to himself when he saw the man had prevailed. They walked back together in a far more contented frame of mind. What had he said, or promised, to produce this change ? How many women's hearts have been broken on the wheel that turns men's promises.

James Hyson followed them into the rooms. He saw her sit down and play, the man standing behind her. He studied her face, and saw the danger-light flash in her eyes. He knew it was powerless to keep her off the gamblers' rock ; more, it lured her on with its false light, as wreckers have done gallant ships

on cruel coasts. She played and won. Again she played and won.

James Hyson edged nearer to them, pushing his way with but scant ceremony through the mob of well-dressed people. He was near enough to hear the man say :

"Come, do not tempt fortune too far."

"One more stake," she replied.

"The last," he answered impatiently.

She pushed the whole of her winnings on. The man tried to stop her. He was too late.

Again she won.

She rose from the table, and he gathered up her glittering pile. The gamblers watched them curiously as they went out of the room.

A man standing near James Hyson said : "Do you know them?"

"Rather; you bet I do. He's Francis Kearney. I have had a good many wagers with him in my time."

"Who is the lady?"

"They say she is his wife, but one never knows. She is generally with him at home, so I suppose it is all right."

James Hyson determined to make the acquaintance of this man and woman who interested him so much. It was not a difficult matter. A casual nod to Francis Kearney was the first step. They met frequently, gradually drifted into conversation—and at making men and women interested in his talk he was an adept—and eventually became acquaintances. It was not long before Kearney introduced James



Hyson to his wife. He congratulated her upon her plucky win.

"It was risky to put the whole of your winnings on," he said.

"My luck was in, and I felt certain of success. The winning meant much more to me than you can imagine."

"Then I am very glad you won," he answered; and thought to himself:

"The diamonds ; she plunged to save them, but it will only be for a short time."

The express ran alongside the boat at Dover, and James Hyson, taking his handbag with him, proceeded leisurely on board. He received a friendly nod from two or three men in uniform on the boat.

## CHAPTER XV

### ACROSS THE CHANNEL

A FEW more words about James Hyson and his acquaintance with Francis Kearney before he is accompanied on his journey.

When the Kearneys left Monte Carlo, James Hyson travelled with them.

Francis Kearney was attracted by the strange man he could not understand, and who seemed to read his fellow-creatures like a book. James Hyson had done him a good turn by warning him against a notorious swindler, and Francis Kearney was as grateful as he knew how to be.

Several times he had played cards and handled the dice-box with this man, and lost money, but he never suspected anything unfair until James Hyson gave him a hint. The sharper was caught in the act, and Francis Kearney made him disgorge his spoil. To such a man as Kearney this action on the part of Hyson was sufficient to ensure his regard and respect. He estimated him from his own standpoint, and considered him a clever man who lived principally by his wits.

Mrs. Kearney also liked James Hyson, but she placed a very different construction upon his

capabilities. She knew he was clever, his conversation proved it, and he was respectful to women, and of this attribute in men she had not had much experience—at least, for some years.

They journeyed to London together, and James Hyson visited them at their house. He also met Francis Kearney at race meetings, and the latter soon commenced to confide in him.

It was from a friend in the paddock at Epsom on Derby Day that James Hyson first learned who Mrs. Kearney was.

"She is a daughter of Richard Raymond of The Folly, in ——shire. You probably know the story of his strange death?"

"Yes; it interested me. I have several cuttings from the papers about it."

"What a fellow you are for collecting morbid stories!"

"It has been my hobby ever since I was a lad at school. I have hundreds of cases pasted in my books."

"It is a curious hobby," replied his friend.

"It is more interesting than collecting stamps or post-cards."

"To you it may be, but it would give me the horrors."

Time passed, and James Hyson continued to meet Francis Kearney, but he never saw his wife. It was not his business to ask why, although he often inquired after her. At last Francis Kearney acknowledged that there had been serious differences between them, and they had agreed to separate.

"We are happier apart," he said, "and we never hit it off very well together."

This was such a common occurrence that James Hyson took no notice of it, but after a time he commenced to wonder where Mrs. Kearney had taken up her abode. He endeavoured to find out, but met with no success.

Then he saw the arrival of Ralph Raymond from abroad, announced in the long article in a sporting paper. This interested him. Here was Mrs. Kearney's brother, and he would naturally desire to see his sister.

"Is Ralph Raymond your wife's brother?" he asked Francis Kearney.

"I believe so, but I have never met him."

"But, of course, Mrs. Kearney has mentioned him to you?"

"Only once or twice. They were not very good friends, and he has been abroad for many years."

"Then he does not know you are his sister's husband?"

"No; I suppose not. I saw the announcement of his return to England in the paper; that is the first intimation I had of it."

"They are a curious family, these Raymonds."

"Very; you would say so if you knew as much about them as myself."

"What sort of a place is The Folly?"

"Oh! a tumbledown ruin, and the grounds are a perfect wilderness. It will take a heap of money to put it in repair, and I do not suppose he has much.

It is a pity, for it must have been a fine old place," said Kearney.

"Have you been there?" asked James Hyson, looking at him curiously, and thinking of the remark he had overheard at Monte Carlo about the plate and the diamonds.

"Yes—that is to say, no," replied Kearney irritably and hesitatingly. "I mean, I intended on many occasions to go down with my wife to look at the place, but something always prevented us. She gave me such interesting descriptions of it that I felt I should like to see it."

"So should I!" was the unexpected reply.

"You!" exclaimed James Kearney, and his companion detected a note of alarm in his voice.

"I am fond of old, half-ruined, neglected houses and grounds; they appeal to my somewhat morbid nature. I think I will go down and have a look round."

Clearly Francis Kearney did not like this prospect. He said:

"You will go on a fool's errand, for no one is allowed to enter the place."

"I wonder why!"

"How the devil should I know," was Kearney's angry retort, and he walked away.

James Hyson pondered over this conversation; it afforded him much food for reflection.

"I am certain he has been there," he said to himself; "and this being so, what reason had he for denying it? There's some mystery here. Probably the silver plate was hidden away at The Folly, and

Mrs. Kearney knew where it was, and obtained it for him. That sounds feasible, and it is also within the bounds of probability that he accompanied her there to get it. The arrival of Ralph Raymond will interestingly complicate matters. If the plate has disappeared, he will want to know where it is."

James Hyson was not long before he had Ralph Raymond pointed out to him. He also discovered, with his usual cleverness, that he had been to The Folly.

It was, however, by a mere chance that he happened to have gone down to The Folly, and was in the grounds when Ralph and Dan Cotswold were digging out Rosalind Raymond's grave. Their proceedings astonished James Hyson, and he watched them intently. He was a considerable distance away, but he saw they were both dismayed at some discovery they had made. He was worked up to a pitch of excitement he had seldom experienced. What were they digging for? Something that had probably been hidden after the crash in order to conceal it from the creditors, and now Ralph Raymond, on his return home, was anxious to see if it was safe.

"It must be the silver plate," thought Hyson. "That's it, safe enough. He has discovered it is gone, and I know who has taken it. Mr. Ralph Raymond, I may be able to assist you in recovering it."

This is what happened at The Folly. James Hyson was the man peering at them from the bushes; he was also the man who called upon Jack

Herries and told him to question Ralph as to his digging in the garden.

The Calais boat cast off, and was soon out in the Channel.

James Hyson had made the passage many times, but he was very much interested in the object of his present trip.

He had not seen Francis Kearney for some time, and hearing he was in Paris, he was proceeding thither to see him. What his motive was he hardly knew himself at present. The scene he accidentally witnessed at The Folly made a deep impression upon him. He commenced to weave a plot very much to his liking, out of the material at his disposal.

The silver plate, without a doubt, had been hidden in the grounds at The Folly, and Mrs. Kearney could not have dug it out and carried it away herself, therefore Francis Kearney must have assisted her, that was almost certain ; she would not have trusted anyone else. And it must have been done when the old man in charge had retired to rest, which he probably did early.

“Where is Mrs. Kearney?”

This was the question James Hyson found repeated over and over again.

The whole bent of his nature tended to draw his mind to the conclusion that she had met with foul play. He had no adequate reason for thinking so, but nevertheless he could not rid himself of the presentiment that such was the case.

He did not trust Francis Kearney, and he knew

enough of him to surmise that he was a dangerous man. Up to this time he had not brought himself to think that Kearney had done his wife any serious injury.

It was just possible that when Kearney demanded the diamonds she had refused to hand them over. They were, no doubt, family jewels, and she was loath to part with them. Were they in her possession, or, like the silver plate, hidden somewhere at The Folly? That sounded improbable; such a desolate place was hardly safe to leave valuable stones in, and yet no one would be likely to search for them there.

With such thoughts as these, James Hyson busied his brain as the boat churned through the rolling waves of the Channel towards Calais. He rose from his seat and walked about the deck, the strong salt air blowing sharply in his face. He was a good sailor, and the vagaries of the Channel seas never troubled him.

At Calais he waited until the passengers had rudely elbowed each other in a frantic endeavour to be first ashore, and then quietly walked down the gangway. He proceeded to the train and secured one of the best seats, while people who had arrived several minutes before him were still insanely rushing up and down the corridor, peering into each compartment, and eventually finding rest in a most uncomfortable position.

He had luncheon in the car, and again waited until the bulk of the passengers were seated, and then took a cosy corner that had been passed over in disdain.

The train rushed along through the bright green



country, not unlike the land he had just left behind, and the carriage oscillated as the engine swept round the curves. A man sitting at the next table, opposite to him, had his glass filled almost to the brim, raised as the curve was negotiated, and as a natural consequence the wine flowed freely over his collar, descended gracefully down his white shirt front, and found a final resting-place on the table-cloth.

James Hyson knew these curves, and he avoided such little *contretemps* like an old traveller. It amused him to watch the people in the car. No dish placed before them appeared to give satisfaction, and yet their cookery at home, he thought, was probably unmentionable. It is, however, the fashion with the untravelled to grumble at everything and everybody. The average Englishman on the Continent resembles a bear in a travelling menagerie—he is constantly growling.

James Hyson did not growl. He smiled pleasantly at intervals during his meal, paid his bill without demur, gave a satisfactory tip to the waiter, sauntered leisurely to his carriage, sat down in a slumberous position, and placidly went to sleep. He awoke at the correct moment, and had all his things ready for the porter when he entered the car at Paris.

## CHAPTER XVI

### AN ADVERTISEMENT

FRANCIS KEARNEY left the Hôtel de Nesville early in the morning of the day that James Hyson arrived in Paris. He proceeded down the Rue de la Paix, crossed the Place Vendome, with its towering column in the centre, and the Rue St. Honoré, then turning to the right, walked towards the Champs Elysées. It was a beautiful spring morning, and the magnificent trees were resplendent in their brilliant, refreshing green, and the grass looked, as it always does in the fair city of Paris, as though dust and dirt never touched a single blade. Already there was considerable stir. Motors and carriages were coming down the wide drive, their occupants bound citywards. Ladies on horseback, some riding, some astride, were cantering along, enjoying the exhilarating scene.

It was a morning to delight all lovers of Nature, but Francis Kearney was not one of her lovers. He was too much occupied with the dark side of human nature to think of anything else.

He did not seem to have any object in view other than morning exercise. Had he been asked why he went at such a rapid pace he would probably have answered that he was "in a devil of a temper, and was trying to calm himself by extra exertion."

He passed the famous Arc de Triomphe, and walked into the Bois de Boulogne. Here there were not so many people, and those he met were mostly on horseback, exercising on the green sward, on the side of the road, or cantering on the gravel way. Here and there an acquaintance nodded to him, but there was very little cordiality in the acknowledgments. Kearney, however, seldom noted the coolness shown towards him ; it did not suit his purpose.

He knew Paris well, and amongst the fast set he was welcomed as a comrade. At one of the cafés he had a cup of coffee, and sat down beneath the shade of the trees. The sun was hotter now, and he had walked several miles. He had not come out with the intention of meeting anyone ; but when he saw a slim, horsey-looking man coming across the road towards him he was glad he had come in this direction. The little man had seen him as he walked along the road, and at once came to him.

"Well, 'Tiger,' what brings you here? Not much occasion for you to walk to get off weight, I should think."

"No, Mr. Kearney," was the reply, with an American twang in the voice, "there is no necessity for me to walk to pull myself down ; I walk to pull myself together."

"Very good, 'Tiger' ; I suppose you were going the pace last night," said Kearney.

"That's just it. You've guessed it. I went to the Folies Marigny, and then to Maxim's. I guess

we had a pretty good time of it. Paris is just all right. I reckon it's the finest place for a 'shandy dan' in the wide world."

"Translate that expression ; it is foreign to me."

"Can't, Mr. Kearney, it's one of my own make. I suppose you would call it a howling spree."

"Perhaps I should ; it is near enough, anyhow."

"You look pretty glum yourself," said Tim Roley, better known as "Tiger," an American jockey, with a considerable reputation as a rider, and a still more considerable reputation as an exceedingly cunning and unscrupulous man. Nothing would have pleased the authorities more than to have "warned him off," but he had so far been clever enough to keep out of their clutches.

"I am not in the best of tempers, I confess."

"What has ruffled your feelings ?"

"Something that will interest you."

"Indeed ! Out with it."

"As a reward for favours done, I told you my horse Satellite would win the big Steeplechase at Auteuil."

"You did ; have you changed your mind ?"

"No ; but another horse of mine has been entered that has a very good chance of beating me, if he is fit and well ridden."

"How can a horse of yours be entered without your consent ? The thing's impossible," said Roley.

"I own a horse named Culloden, and he is leased to Colonel Ilford for twelve months. He has entered him for the race, and the cursed luck of the thing is, the lease expires the next day," said Kearney.

"Say, that's curious."

"It is more ; it is d—d annoying."

"But can Culloden beat Satellite ?"

"He might if he is at his best, which I hope will not be the case."

"What are you going to do ?"

"Try and persuade Colonel Ilford to scratch him, but he is an obstinate old beggar."

"Most colonels are."

"I do not know who will ride the horse, but if necessary, I want your assistance."

"In what way ?"

"I am riding Satellite, as you are aware, and if you can arrange with a couple of the jockeys to keep their eyes on Culloden, it will assist me materially."

"Can't do it, Mr. Kearney. If it was a flat race I might, but I know hardly any riders over the fences."

"You can manage it if you like. There is plenty of time to think about it, and perhaps there may be no necessity for it ; but win the race I must," said Kearney.

"Short of money ?" asked Roley.

"I am not overburdened with it ; a big win would put me all right."

"I could do with a haul myself. Paris is a fine place for doing in the dollars. I earn plenty, but I spend more."

"Where are you going now ?"

"To meet a friend near the Marigny," grinned Roley.

"So early in the morning," said Kearney, laughing.

"It's a promise. I do not suppose it will come off, but I am bound to be there."

"The result of Maxim's, I suppose," said Kearney.

"That's about it ; you have hit the mark."

"I will walk back with you," said Kearney ; and rising from his chair, they went off together.

"It would be a funny thing if you were beaten by your own horse," said Roley.

"I don't see where the fun comes in ; it would be very annoying," replied Kearney.

"And there's another thing : if Culloden is interfered with, and comes to grief, he might be killed, or lamed, and that would be a serious loss to you. What is he worth ?"

"I would not take two thousand for him."

"You don't say ! Then take my advice. Strike your horse out, and back Culloden."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. Satellite must win, and I shall have the pleasure of riding him," said Kearney.

"Of course, you will please yourself, but my plan is the safer. There is a French horse called Flambeau that will take a lot of beating. I know the man who will ride him, and he thinks no end of his chance."

"I thought you said you were not acquainted with any steeplechase riders. Who has the mount on Flambeau ?"

"I said I knew one or two, and Berg is one of them."

"Does he ride Flambeau ?"

"Yes ; at least, so the present arrangement is."

"Berg is about the best man they have at this game," said Kearney.

"He is, and he has received a big retainer to ride the horse ; and he is worth it."

"I have seen Flambeau run; he must have improved a lot to have a chance with either Satellite or Culloden," said Kearney.

"Berg tells me he has come on wonderfully, and he would not have accepted the mount had such not been the case," replied Roley.

"I shall see you at Longchamps on Sunday," said Kearney. "We can talk the matter over again."

"I am riding Marie there. You had better back her; she has a chance," said Roley.

"Thanks; I will not forget," replied Kearney.

Tim Roley left him, and turned down the avenue leading to the Folies Marigny.

"He's a fool," muttered Kearney—"A silly fool to spend his time in this way. He may come in useful yet, and I know he can do what I want if he likes. I shall not forget how he squared that duffer on the favourite at St. Cloud. He had no earthly chance of winning if the favourite had been a trier. By Jove! what a dividend there was on the totalisator, and we both drew a handsome stake."

In the afternoon, Francis Kearney strolled into the Boulevard des Italiens, and sat down in front of the Café Anglais. He met several acquaintances there, and the various races of importance drawing near for decision were discussed. After dinner he smoked a cigar in the hall of the hotel, and scanned the papers to see where he could pass the time later on.

About nine o'clock he was preparing to go out, when, to his surprise, he saw James Hyson enter the hall.

"You did not expect to see me?" said Hyson, as he shook hands with him.

"You are about the last person I expected to see," he replied.

"I came over by the nine o'clock express; I have business in Paris," said Hyson.

"How did you know I was at the Hôtel de Nesville?"

"Saw your name in the *Messenger*," replied Hyson.

"But I have been here for some time, and you have only just arrived."

"I have the paper posted to me regularly in England. I like to see who is in Paris. I know who I may expect to meet when I come over, and I also find it convenient when I wish to call on a friend. You see it proved useful to me to-night when I wished to see you," said Hyson.

"But you did not come over to Paris for the express purpose of seeing me!" exclaimed Kearney.

"Not exactly, although I thought I might render you some assistance," said Hyson.

"What do you mean? I am in no need of assistance."

"Then I am mistaken. Have you read this? I thought perhaps you caused it to be inserted," said James Hyson.

Francis Kearney took the paper and read the following:

"Any person who can give information to the advertiser as to the whereabouts of Rosalind Kearney, *nee* Rosalind Raymond, will be handsomely rewarded. Address, 294 *Daily Messenger* Offices, Rue St. Honoré, Paris."



James Hyson watched Francis Kearney closely as he read the announcement, and saw his face turn livid, and his hands tremble.

Kearney held the paper high to conceal his agitation.

"Did you insert it?" asked Hyson.

"Let me read it again; I cannot understand it," said Kearney, in a hollow voice. He said this to gain time to recover his composure. "I did not insert it; I know nothing about it. I wonder who put it in, and for what reason?"

"I thought it must have been you, because the address is in Paris," said Hyson.

"It is a cursed piece of impertinence," said Kearney, in a rage.

"Not if her brother, Ralph Raymond, put it in," said Hyson slowly.

Again a look of fear came into Kearney's eyes, and he quickly replied:

"But he never heard of our marriage. He would not know her name was Kearney."

"Then who can have put it in?" said Hyson.

"I don't know; I wish I could find out."

"Shall I try and help you?" said Hyson.

"You!" exclaimed Kearney. "How the deuce can you help me?"

"Come to your room and I will tell you," replied James Hyson.

## CHAPTER XVII

### "A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR"

"HAVE you ever had the curiosity to wonder what my occupation is?" asked Hyson, when they were alone.

"Many times. I confess you are a puzzle to me. You seem to be a man of independent means," replied Kearney.

"I am, although not rich. Being a bachelor, and not having extravagant ideas, I manage to live comfortably."

"How do you kill time?"

James Hyson smiled as he replied :

"You think killing time is my main object in life? You are mistaken. I have plenty to occupy my mind."

"I should not have thought it."

"How many years is it since we became acquainted at Monte Carlo?"

"I really do not know; three or four, perhaps."

"Three," replied James Hyson. "Do you recollect that night at the rooms, when your wife won a heavy stake?"

"I am not likely to forget it; the experience was pleasant," said Kearney.

"Do you know why I went to Monte Carlo?"

"No."

"To study human beings as seen at their worst."

Francis Kearney looked at him curiously, and said:

"That is a strange occupation. Why not study them at their best? It would be more agreeable."

"Not to me. I have had a lot of experience of the dark side of life."

"What are you?" asked Kearney, in a strained voice.

"I suppose you would call me a meddler in other people's business, and perhaps you would be right; but I do not regard it in that light."

"It takes me all my time to mind my own business," replied Kearney.

"I think some explanation is due to you, because we have been acquaintances for some considerable time, and I wish to enlighten you as to why I said I might be of assistance to you."

James Hyson then proceeded to give Kearney an insight into his mode of life, commencing with his schoolboy days, and the incident of the celebrated poisoning case. He kept his eyes fixed on Kearney's face during the recital, and noticed the extraordinary interest he betrayed in it.

"You see, I may call myself a criminal investigator out of pure love of the thing; the solving of my theories is my sole absorbing delight. You may not understand it, but such is the case."

Francis Kearney was puzzled, bewildered, and somewhat alarmed. This man was dangerous and clever. He wished he had known all this before.

Why had he shown him that advertisement? Had he an object in view? Did he suspect anything? He was very uneasy, and angry with himself for being so.

"Have you ever been in the detective force?" he asked.

"No; but I have rendered them assistance on many occasions, although they are chary of acknowledging it."

"Why did you show me the advertisement?"

"Because I thought if you had not seen it, it would interest you."

"It does. I want to find my wife," was Francis Kearney's unexpected reply.

James Hyson was puzzled. Was the man lying; had he anything to conceal; and was the question asked to put him off the scent?

"You do not know where she is?"

"No; she has left the house where she resided after our separation, and I can hear nothing of her," said Kearney.

"And you are anxious to find her?"

"Naturally. We parted friends, but we agreed it would be to our mutual advantage to separate."

"It is evident from the advertisement someone else wishes to discover her whereabouts."

"The announcement is strange. I cannot understand it at all."

"I think the only solution is that her brother is desirous of meeting her."

"But, as I have already informed you, he does not know she is married," said Kearney.

"He could easily find out by making inquiries."

"Perhaps so. Anyway, it is a mystery to me."

"If you are really anxious to find Mrs. Kearney, perhaps I may be able to help you," said James Hyson.

"I thought only criminal cases interested you."

"May not this turn out to be one?" asked Hyson quickly.

Francis Kearney started, and it did not escape his companion's notice.

"Surely you do not mean to hint that something has happened to her?"

"Is it improbable? A handsome woman, separated from her husband, unprotected in London—one can never tell."

"Do you insinuate that my wife would so far forget herself?" asked Kearney savagely.

"I insinuate nothing. You, her lawful protector, have left her; you have only yourself to blame if she errs," said Hyson.

"We agreed to separate."

"So I understand; but did you consider the consequences?"

"I live my life; she lives hers," said Kearney.

"Exactly. Do you judge her mode of life by your own?" asked Hyson.

Francis Kearney commenced to be afraid of this man, and his temper was fast gaining control over him.

"You were right in saying you were a man who minded other people's business," said Kearney sneeringly.

James Hyson's feelings were unruffled by this remark. He was a strange man, and a curious thing had happened to him quite in consonance with his character. He first admired Mrs. Kearney, and her face was constantly present in his imagination, and eventually he fell a victim to her attractions, and acknowledged to himself that she was a woman he could love. He stifled this feeling, and the more he crushed it the stronger it grew. No one knew of it but himself; it was his secret, and he hugged it tenaciously. It was James Hyson who had inserted the advertisement he had shown to Francis Kearney, and he had a motive for doing so. He knew Mrs. Kearney had disappeared from her house—this he found out by making inquiries—and he thought it strange. He had not forgotten the conversation about the plate and diamonds at Monte Carlo, and he had no faith in Francis Kearney. After what he had seen at The Folly, he was more than ever convinced that some harm had befallen Mrs. Kearney.

“Are you anxious to find out where your wife is?” he asked, ignoring the remark.

“I have told you so.”

“Do you wish me to assist you?” asked Hyson.

“What is your fee?” sneered Kearney.

This time James Hyson resented his remark, and said quickly:

“I have never been paid for any work I have done in the cases I have been interested in. Many people have been grateful to me for assisting them, and I have made fast friends through my exertions to serve them. On more than one occasion I have

rescued a son from a career of crime, and earned a father's and a mother's blessing. Had the law been put in force the consequences would have been ruin and disgrace.

"I can point with pride to one case in which I saved a young officer from paying the penalty of his folly. He has since proved himself worthy of my exertions on his behalf. He now lies buried in South Africa, and the Victoria Cross was on his breast before he died. Had he been punished for his folly his country would have lost a brilliant soldier, who led many a forlorn hope. I am a meddler in other people's business, but it is for good, not for evil. Crime and criminals are my study, but I have leisure to help in genuine cases of distress and trouble, and my knowledge proves useful. I accept no fees from any man, least of all from you."

Francis Kearney saw he had gone too far. This man who closely resembled himself in appearance was more than a match for him. He commenced to wonder what he suspected, how much he knew, and he saw danger ahead. He adopted a more conciliatory tone, and said :

"I did not mean to insult you. I have seldom found men spend their time and work for no reward."

"I accept your apology. Do you wish me to help you in this matter?"

Francis Kearney most decidedly did not, but he thought the safer way would be to accept his proffered services.

"I shall be much obliged if you will," he said.

"I will do my best for you. Have you any idea where Mrs. Kearney would be likely to go?"

"None at all."

"Did she wish to avoid you? Pardon my asking the question."

"Not that I am aware of," said Kearney.

"Do you think it possible she has gone to her old home, or in the neighbourhood?" asked Hyson slowly and deliberately.

Francis Kearney's face twitched, and his hands clenched. It was with difficulty he refrained from striking James Hyson. There was something uncanny about this man, and his way of putting things. Why did he ask that question?

"She would not be likely to go to The Folly," he said quickly, in a tone of suppressed excitement. "It is the last place she would think of going to. She hated it, and the whole neighbourhood; besides, the place is a ruin, and uninhabitable."

"I have known people hanker to return to the place where they were born out of mere curiosity."

"I tell you she would never think of going there," said Kearney.

"All the same, I think it might be as well for me to make inquiries there," said Hyson.

Francis Kearney felt desperate. Was the man playing with him? Did he know anything? No, it was impossible.

"It would be useless—a mere waste of time," he said.

"If you think so, well and good," replied Hyson.



He had learnt much from his questions, and had no desire to press the matter.

"How long are you remaining in Paris?" asked Kearney.

"About a week. As soon as I have done my business I shall return to London, and I will make inquiries at once. If I hear anything important, I will at once communicate with you; and mind you, there is no fee. I am doing it to help you, because I am sure you must be anxious about her," said James Hyson.

"I am exceedingly anxious; more so after what you have said. I did not for a moment think there might have been foul play, nor do I think so now. It is merely a woman's whim, a desire for change—nothing more," replied Kearney.

"I hope such may prove to be the case. If anything serious has happened, there may be trouble with Ralph Raymond. They are a curious family; I have studied their history. More than one of the Raymonds have taken the law into their own hands, and dealt out summary justice to men who have injured them, but who would have probably got off scot free if put on their trial," said Hyson.

"I have nothing whatever to do with Ralph Raymond. I do not know him, and have no desire to make his acquaintance," said Kearney.

"I will try and find out if he inserted that advertisement; it will help me considerably," said James Hyson.

"I do not see how that can assist you."

"If it emanated from him, then we can perhaps be

of mutual assistance to each other. I shall, of course, tell him you have asked me to help you in the matter."

"Take my advice, and leave Ralph Raymond alone," said Kearney. "You know what these Raymonds are, and I am surprised you wish to meet him."

"Curiosity, pure curiosity, I assure you," said Hyson.

It was late when James Hyson left the Hôtel de Nesville, and as he walked across the Place de la Concorde he stopped in front of the Egyptian Obelisk, which occupies the site of the famous, or infamous, Guillotine, where Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, the Duc d'Orleans, and hundreds of Royalists and Republicans lost their heads. He looked up at the ancient column, and thought of the blood that had been shed on this spot.

"If ever a man deserved to be guillotined, it is Francis Kearney," he muttered to himself, and then crossed the bridge to the Quai d'Orsay.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A FIERY OLD MAN

CULLODEN was doing splendid work on the Bankshire Downs, and Ralph Raymond was favourably impressed with his chance in the Auteuil Steeplechase. His heart and soul were in his work, and if he could beat Francis Kearney, it would give him great satisfaction. He rode the horse regularly, and schooled him over the fences. Culloden was doing a splendid preparation; and best of all, Ralph, who was to ride him in the race, was daily becoming better acquainted with him. He was a peculiar tempered horse, and required much humouring; but Ralph was accustomed to this, and quickly found out the best way to get on with him.

Culloden was a faultless jumper, and Ralph knew he was better over big fences than hurdles, as he had anticipated.

"It will be somewhat of a surprise to Loughton," he thought, "when he discovers I was correct in my surmise."

When Culloden was in proper condition, Colonel Ilford came down to see him do his work, and was very pleased at the way the horse took his fences.

"You have effected a great improvement in him," he said, "and he is a far better horse than when you

beat him at Kempton. Do you think he has pace enough? They go very fast at Auteuil."

"I will show you whether he has pace enough," replied Ralph, "before you return to town. You have promised to stay the week with me, and I have prepared a little surprise for you on Saturday morning."

"I suppose it is no use my questioning you as to the nature of the surprise?" laughed the Colonel.

"Wait and see; it will give you the more pleasure to be kept in the dark," replied Ralph.

Buntontown was an old-fashioned place, and Colonel Ilford said he should like to renew his acquaintance with it, so Ralph drove him over. They put up at the Brown Bear, a curious hostelry with a history. During the civil war between King and Parliament, the Brown Bear had been at one time the headquarters of no less a personage than Oliver Cromwell, and the room where he held his council of war, and the actual chair he sat in, were shown with much pride by the landlord.

Into this room Colonel Ilford and Ralph Raymond were ushered by the host, one Amos Barber, a ponderous man, resembling one of his own casks on stilts.

The Colonel sat down in a large wooden chair, and called for a bottle of old port.

"You ought to have some good wine in such an ancient house," he said. "I daresay you have had some of the precious liquid laid down for thirty years or more."

Amos Barber was flattered. He had no wine of

that age, but he made bold to agree with Colonel Ilford, and said he would bring what he desired.

"It is only in such out-of-the-way places as this one meets with the real old-fashioned port," said the Colonel. "I think in some houses the cobwebs require a good deal of trouble to find ; they have a very fresh appearance on the bottles."

Ralph laughed, and said : "It is quite evident you are not troubled with gout."

"Never had a twinge of it in my life. Thank God, I never feel at all out of sorts, and yet I have done a great deal to break down my constitution," said the Colonel.

The landlord returned with the wine, which he assured them was the best in his cellar. He put the basket in which it lay on the table, and carefully drew the cork without shaking the bottle.

The mellow, rich-coloured liquid shone like a ruby in the glasses, and the Colonel sipped it with satisfaction.

"Not quite thirty years old, landlord," he said ; "but it is a very good wine, and does your house credit."

"There's Henry Loughton," said Ralph, as he saw the trainer pass the window.

"Call him in, landlord, call him in," said the Colonel.

Henry Loughton entered the room, and shook hands with Colonel Ilford and Ralph.

"Will you join us?" said the Colonel. "Our worthy host prides himself on the quality of his port, and not without just cause."

Henry Loughton raised his glass, and said, with a smile :

"Your health, Colonel, and yours, Mr. Raymond, and I hope to have the satisfaction of returning the compliment in Paris after Satellite has won."

"We shall beat you, Loughton—I am sure we shall," laughed the Colonel.

"You do not know how Satellite has improved," replied Loughton.

"And you do not know that his owner is rather afraid of us."

"Mr. Kearney!" exclaimed the trainer. "Have you heard from him?"

"Yes," replied Colonel Ilford. "I did not tell you, Raymond, but I have heard from him."

"Where is he?" asked Ralph eagerly.

"In Paris. He is fond of that most beautiful of cities."

"Will you enlighten me as to the contents of his letter?" said Loughton, smiling. "I heard from him yesterday, but he did not mention he had written to you."

"He said he was surprised to see Culloden entered, and pointed out to me that it was useless to run him for such a race as the Steeplechase at Auteuil. He begged of me to withdraw him, because the horse would probably be injured; and as the lease expired the following day, it was manifestly unfair to him. There was much more to the same effect, but I read between the lines, and judged that he was afraid Culloden would prove a thorn in the side of Satellite. He is a very cute gentleman indeed,

but not quite sharp enough to get on the blind side of an old campaigner like myself."

"I should like to have read your reply," said Ralph.

"The pith of it may be summed up as follows. I informed him that it was precisely because the lease expired the following day that I was running the horse, as I wished to win a big stake before I gave him up. I also informed him that his opinion of Culloden differed from mine; that I thought him a very good horse; that he had a great chance of winning the race, and that if he wished to sell him outright I would send him a cheque for a thousand for him, and take the risk of his breaking his neck in the Steeplechase," said Colonel Ilford.

Ralph and the trainer laughed heartily, and the former said:

"That ought to satisfy him. You gave him a rare pill to swallow."

"I have received no reply to my offer, nor did I expect any," said the Colonel. "Culloden is worth more than a thousand pounds, in my opinion."

"I would not give more for him," said Loughton.

"You seem sanguine of beating us," said the Colonel. "Will you have a wager on the result?"

"If you do not name too high a figure, with pleasure," said the trainer.

"How would a modest 'pony' suit you?"

"Very well. I will bet you five-and-twenty pounds Satellite beats Culloden."

"One to win."

"Yes, one to win."

"Done!" said the Colonel, and out came his book, in which he entered the bet.

Amos Barber came in to see if there was anything further required, and Henry Loughton said:

"As I have made such a good bet, allow me to return the compliment. You can bring another bottle, Amos."

"This is a fine old room," said Colonel Ilford, glancing round at the black oak wainscoting.

"It is," said Amos, with pride. "Very few hotels can boast of the like; and that is a very remarkable chair you are sitting in."

Colonel Ilford examined it, and agreed with him.

"It has a wonderful history; a very great man used it during the civil wars—a very great man indeed," said Amos.

"Ah! King Charles, poor fellow," said the Colonel.

"No, not King Charles. Oliver Cromwell."

Colonel Ilford sprang to his feet, and the chair fell back on to the floor with a crash. The irate old soldier kicked it away savagely.

"The murderous villain! I would never have sat in it had I known. Take it away, my man. Do you hear, take the d—d thing out of my sight or I'll smash it to atoms," and he kicked the obnoxious chair again.

Ralph and Henry Loughton were highly amused, and laughed heartily. Not so Amos Barber. He rushed to pick up the chair, and handled it as carefully as a mother would a child. Hastily he conveyed it out of the room, looking at the Colonel as though he had committed sacrilege.



"To think I have demeaned myself by sitting in that old brewer's vat chair. I am disgraced," said the Colonel.

"Old Oliver was not half a bad sort," said Ralph slyly.

The Colonel turned round sharply, and said :

"Say that again, my young friend, and I will scratch Culloden."

"God save the King!" replied Ralph.

"That's better! that's better!" said the Colonel. "God save the King! His Majesty's health!" and he raised his glass and drank.

Amos Barber did not reappear. He did not even wish them good-day. He was examining the "sacred" chair to see if it had sustained any damage, and he vowed he would have the law on the Colonel if the precious piece of furniture had sustained any injury.

"You must think me a fiery old man," said Colonel Ilford, when he and Ralph sat smoking, after enjoying another of Mrs. Mersey's excellent dinners.

"You made a very savage attack on an innocent article of furniture," laughed Ralph.

"By Jove! I would have given that burly beer-seller a ten-pound note if he would have allowed me to smash it to pieces."

"It's not worth it," said Ralph.

"You are right, it is not," replied the Colonel. Then after a pause, he added: "It is Saturday to-morrow, and my impatience will be satisfied. It is most unkind of you to keep me in the dark; it is not good for my nerves."

"I had no idea you possessed such things," replied Ralph.

"I am not naturally nervous, but when a man is kept in a state of suspense such as you have had me in for the past few days, it cultivates nerves ; it brings them to a head, so to speak," said Colonel Ilford, with a smile.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A COMPACT

IT was a rare gallop, and Colonel Ilford was quite satisfied with Ralph's surprise.

As he saw Fearless leading Culloden at a great pace, he wondered what the weights were, and asked Ralph.

"How much do you think he is giving away?" said Ralph.

"A stone or more."

"Two stone and a half," replied Ralph.

"You don't say so! Will he beat her?"

"I think so."

"Then it will be a great performance. He only gave her eighteen pounds at Kempton," said Colonel Ilford.

The mare and a good-looking three-year-old were leading Culloden a merry dance. Ralph did not ride him, because he wished to see how the horse shaped with another man on his back.

At first Culloden ran unkindly, and shirked his work, but he quickly settled down into his stride, and made up his lost ground rapidly. The three-year-old had a very light weight, and consequently led by many lengths at the end of the first mile, but after this he commenced to fall back.

Fearless reached him first, and passed him, and then came Culloden, half-a-dozen lengths behind.

The distance was three miles, and when the youngster dropped out, the two jumpers had the gallop to themselves.

As they neared the post where Colonel Ilford and Ralph were sitting on horseback, the lad on Culloden urged his mount forward, and he reached the mare's quarters.

It was a slashing finish, and Fearless only just scrambled home in front. She seemed winded after the struggle, but Culloden pulled up fresh, and blew very little.

"That is equal to a win," said Ralph. "If I had ridden him he would have beaten her; he goes better for me than anyone."

Colonel Ilford was well pleased, and his hopes of winning the race increased.

"No wonder Kearney is afraid of him," he said. "It was a cleverly-worded letter he wrote, but it did not deceive me."

He returned to town, and it was arranged that they should meet in Paris the week before the race.

"I have a friend residing at Chantilly, who will give me a box for Culloden, so he had better be taken there from Calais," said Colonel Ilford. "I will arrange for it, and send you all particulars in ample time."

Later in the day Ralph Raymond had a visitor at Heath Lodge. Callers were few and far between, and when he read on the visiting-card handed to him by Mrs. Mersey "James Hyson," it gave him no clue

to the identity of the individual who wished to see him.

"He's a nice-spoken man, and he looks like a gentleman," was Mrs. Mersey's comment.

"Show him in here," said Ralph.

James Hyson entered the room with a pleasant smile on his face, and when the door closed behind Mrs. Mersey, he said :

"I must apologise for intruding, Mr. Raymond, but I think the circumstances warrant it."

"Sit down, please," said Ralph, who fancied he had seen him before, or someone closely resembling him. "To what circumstances do you allude?"

Hyson took a slip of paper from his pocket-book—it was the advertisement offering a reward for information about Rosalind Raymond—and handing it to him, said :

"Have you seen this? It is from the *Times*."

"I seldom see the paper," said Ralph, smiling; "I am not interested in politics."

"There are many admirable articles in it, apart from its undeniable political aspect," said James Hyson.

Ralph was astounded when he read the announcement. It came with as great a shock to him as it had to Francis Kearney. Who could have inserted it, and for what reason? He was greatly disturbed and troubled; it boded evil towards him, he thought.

His face, however, did not betray his thoughts, and he was not agitated as Kearney had been.

"Did you insert it?" asked James Hyson.

"No."

"I thought as you were Mrs. Kearney's brother you might have done so."

"She was married to Francis Kearney?"

"I do not think there is any doubt about that."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes. I have just seen him in Paris," said James Hyson.

"And you showed him this advertisement?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

James Hyson gave him an account of their conversation, as far as he deemed advisable.

"How long have they been separated?" asked Ralph.

"I did not ask him, but I should say about two years," replied Hyson.

"I wonder who inserted this? It seems a strange proceeding."

"It is; and believe me, Mr. Raymond, there is a mystery here that ought to be solved," said James Hyson.

"Do you think my sister has met with foul play?" asked Ralph.

"I hardly know what to think at present. I gave Mr. Kearney my opinion that it was not improbable."

Ralph Raymond wondered who his visitor was. The name James Hyson told him nothing. The best way to find out was to ask him.

"May I inquire who you are—I mean, what is your occupation?" said Ralph.

"Certainly; you are entitled to know."

James Hyson then gave him a brief account of

his way of spending his time, which proved highly interesting to Ralph.

"It is an extraordinary hobby," he said, when James Hyson stopped; "but your time does not appear to be wasted, and you have done much good service to the public by protecting them from desperate criminals. I should think your life is in danger; you risk much, and gain nothing."

"I gain all I desire—occupation and excitement; and where there is danger, the interest is increased," said James Hyson.

"I agree with you," replied Ralph, as he thought of all that had happened since his return to England.

"You have never met Francis Kearney?" asked Hyson.

"I have not, but I think I shall have that doubtful pleasure before long," replied Ralph, with a smile.

"I gathered from his conversation that he is not particularly anxious to meet you."

"Probably not, and he will be very much surprised at the manner of our meeting, the time, and place. May I ask if you are interesting yourself on his behalf to trace my sister?" said Ralph.

"He requested my assistance in the matter, but he did not want it. I had a purpose in forcing my help upon him," was the strange reply.

"Ah!" exclaimed Ralph, much relieved; "then you do not trust Francis Kearney?"

"I do not."

"And you believe what?" asked Ralph.

"That he knows all about your sister's disappear-

ance, and where she is at the present moment," said Hyson.

"Do you think she has met with any violence at his hands?" asked Ralph.

"I will not go so far as that at present," said Hyson. "I must be more sure of my ground; but if I find out he has harmed her, by Heaven, he shall swing for it!"

The man's vehemence startled Ralph. What reason was there for his excitement?

"Leave him to me," said Ralph calmly. "If my sister has been, shall we say, put away by this man, I have a prior right to punish him, and in my own way. Why do you interest yourself in the matter?"

"Because I love her," said Hyson earnestly.

"Love her!" exclaimed Ralph. "Impossible!"

"It is not impossible. She knows nothing of it, but still I love her; and it is that urges me on to avenge her. Let me tell you where we first met."

James Hyson then gave Ralph an account of the meeting at Monte Carlo, how they became acquainted, and of the conversation he had overheard, and of the play at the tables. Then he stopped abruptly, hesitating how far he ought to go, and whether it would be prudent to disclose what he had seen Ralph and the old man doing in The Folly garden.

"Go on," said Ralph, who saw he had not finished. "Everything you have said is intensely interesting."

Still Hyson hesitated. How would Ralph Raymond take it when he heard he had been spied upon?

"Mr. Raymond," went on Hyson, "I think we had better work together in this affair, and bring Francis Kearney to book for his conduct."



"Willingly," said Ralph, "provided you leave his punishment, and the manner of it, to me."

"I must see him punished; you must give me that satisfaction," said Hyson.

"If possible, I will; I can go no farther than that."

"You must not blame me for my conduct, and you must think kindly of me when I tell you everything I know, and what I have done."

Ralph signified assent, and James Hyson said:

"I am the man who told the landlord of the inn at St. Arvans to ask you if you had been digging in The Folly garden, and to note your reply."

Despite himself, Ralph Raymond turned pale. How much did this man know?

"Then you were watching us at work?" said Ralph.

"Yes, and I know what you discovered."

"Indeed," said Ralph, in a hollow voice. "What?"

"That the silver plate had been abstracted from its hiding-place, and I think we can guess who took it, after that conversation at Monte Carlo," said James Hyson.

So great was Ralph's relief at this remark that he quite recovered his composure. The strain had been severe; it was past now. James Hyson knew nothing of *the other thing*!

"Why did you act the spy?" asked Ralph.

"To obtain a clue against Francis Kearney."

"Have you mentioned what you saw to him?"

"Oh, no," said Hyson, smiling. "That would put him on his guard at once."

"You are right in your surmise," said Ralph. "The

plate has disappeared, but there was a letter in the box from my sister."

"May I be allowed to see it?"

"On one condition: that you render me every assistance in your power to make Francis Kearney tell the truth, and confess what he has done with Rosalind," said Ralph.

"Most solemnly I declare I will," replied James Hyson. "It is to be a fight to a finish?"

"Yes," said Ralph; "and I shall strike the first blow in the big Steeplechase at Auteuil."

It was James Hyson's turn to be surprised.

"How?" he asked. "What can you do there?"

"Leave it to me, and watch the result. I have a plan ready which I think will succeed. Shall you be present on the course?"

"I will make it my business to be there," said Hyson.

Ralph Raymond unlocked his desk, and taking out his sister's letter, handed it to James Hyson, who read it carefully, and then said:

"I should never have thought her capable of loving a man like Francis Kearney."

## CHAPTER XX

### A DISGRACEFUL ARRANGEMENT

AT Ralph's request, Colonel Ilford engaged a well-known steeplechase jockey, named Arthur Night, to ride Culloden. He at the same time explained to him that he would only have the mount in case Ralph Raymond was unable to ride, and he had his promise that he would say nothing about this arrangement. Consequently Arthur Night's name was mentioned in the papers as the probable rider of the horse.

When Francis Kearney saw who was to ride Culloden, he was more than ever determined that the horse should not have a fair run. He knew Night was one of the best steeplechase riders in England, and that he was no match for him.

Being an obstinate man, it did not occur to him that the best plan would be for him to entrust the riding of Satellite to a competent professional. It was his ambition to shine in the saddle, and to show the gay crowd at Auteuil what he could do. A win would help him in many ways. His credit was none too good, and he had sold some valuable loose diamonds only a week or two back for a considerable sum to a jeweller in the Rue de la Paix. He explained that the diamonds were part of a legacy

left to him by a relation in South Africa, and that he preferred the money to the stones. He wished to sell them to a jeweller of repute because he knew he could depend upon getting better value for them than if he went elsewhere. This was undoubtedly the case, and Francis Kearney was cute enough to know that no suspicion would attach to a transaction with such a man.

The sum he had received was not yet exhausted, but he had made a big hole in it. Money he sorely needed, but this was not all.

During his frequent visits to Paris he became acquainted with a young American lady, Nora Caone, whose mother, a widow, had married a wealthy French tradesman. Nora Caone had a fortune in her own right, left her by her father, and it was considerably augmented when her mother married again. Madame Henri did not approve of Francis Kearney paying marked attention to her daughter, nor did M. Henri, her stepfather; but this opposition defeated itself, and Nora Caone determined she would not give up seeing him as they desired.

M. Henri at last came to the conclusion that as Francis Kearney would not take a hint that his visits were not acceptable, he must be told in more straightforward language. This he did, and in no unmistakable terms informed him that he desired him not to call at his residence.

Nora Caone was highly indignant at this treatment, and sympathised with him; but with American shrewdness, she declined to become engaged until she knew more about him.

Francis Kearney knew that if he rode the winner of the Auteuil Steeplechase it would increase his chance of winning Nora Caone. Like many Americans, she was fond of horses, and admired pluck in the saddle. The *éclat* attaching to such a performance, Francis Kearney was well aware, would give him a better footing in certain circles in Paris. To be cheered and made much of by such an aristocratic assemblage would be greatly in his favour.

He had, moreover, told Nora Caone that he was to ride his horse Satellite, and that he felt sanguine of success. This news Nora told her mother, and in doing so said :

"So you see he is no common adventurer. He has horses of his own, rides them in races, and has a large establishment in England, where they are trained. I guess I am right, and you are wrong, in your estimate of him."

Madame Henri shrugged her shoulders, and merely remarked that the mere fact of his riding Satellite at Auteuil proved nothing, but her daughter knew her communication had made a favourable impression. Much therefore depended upon Satellite winning, and Francis Kearney meant to leave no stone unturned to effect his object.

He had an interview with Tim Roley, and told him such a plausible story about his prospects if Satellite won, that the jockey was inclined to help him.

"I will make it worth your while, Tim," said Kearney. "You shall have a handsome sum if I win."

"And if you lose, what then? Do I get anything for the risk I am taking?" asked Roley.

"You are fond of jewellery, diamonds especially," said Kearney.

"Rather, you bet! I guess you have none about you."

"You are mistaken; I have. What do you think of that for a stone?"

He took a small piece of tissue paper out of his waistcoat pocket, carefully unwrapped it, and disclosed a ball of cotton wool. Tim's eyes were greedily fixed upon it, and Kearney gently opened the wool and showed to the astonished jockey a beautiful stone, large, and of great brilliancy.

"My, that's a beauty! Is it yours?" he asked doubtfully.

"I should not be likely to have it in my possession otherwise," said Kearney. "Did you ever know a man who entrusted his diamonds to a friend in this fashion?"

"Can't say I did. He'd be an uncommon fool, I guess, to do it," replied Tim.

"The stone is mine. It is worth a couple of hundred pounds at the least, probably more, and you can have it if you will do as I ask you."

"Hand it over," said Tim eagerly. "It's a bargain."

"Not so fast," said Kearney, folding up the cotton wool and replacing the ball in his pocket. "You shall have it when I receive sufficient proof that you have earned it."

"Before the race?"

"Yes."

"What about the other fellows? They will want something."

"Let me know how much, and I will find the money," said Kearney.

Tim Roley was thinking which riders he dare approach on such a subject in safety. There were two jockeys, he knew, who had not particularly good mounts, who would no doubt be willing to earn ten or twenty pounds certain.

"I should think fifty pounds would do it," he said.

"Bring the men to me, and if they agree to try and put Culloden out of it, they shall divide the cash between them," replied Kearney.

It was a base bargain, and it is well for the turf that there are very few Francis Kearneys mixed up in horse-racing. Such men, however, cannot be entirely excluded until they are found out, then their punishment is swift and sure, and the sport knows them no more.

Tim Roley met Francis Kearney by appointment again, and two jockeys were with him. They were not creditable specimens of their profession, and therefore the more useful to Kearney.

"These two friends of mine," said Tim, "are Louis Moskor and André Milon; they ride Chard and Rigny in the Auteuil Steeplechase. I will leave you to talk matters over with them."

Francis Kearney took Tim aside, and said: "You are sure they can be relied upon?"

"As far as I can guarantee, yes; but you must fix it up with them yourself. I want no hand in the

business. I merely said you wished to see them," said Tim.

"Did you explain why I wanted to see them?"

"No; I thought it better not. I don't want to get into any trouble; my name is none too good now."

"Will they split if they do not agree to do as I ask?"

"No, that you can rely upon," said Tim. "When shall I have the diamond?"

"After I have arranged everything with your friends," said Francis Kearney.

Moskor and Milon were two French riders of doubtful repute, but so far nothing had been proved against them, and thus they were in the same boat as Roley.

Francis Kearney was experienced in dealing with such men, and he had not much trouble in talking them over. He spoke French fairly well, which was all in his favour.

"It will be a risky job," said Milon, who acted as spokesman. "If we are suspected of foul riding it will be all up with us."

"Have your mounts any chance of winning?" asked Kearney.

"No, I do not think they have," replied Milon.

"Then why not do as I ask? My money is certain. I will give it you now, and if Satellite wins you shall have a hundred pounds each. That is a fair offer. It will be very easy to manage, if you are careful, on such a course as Auteuil. You need not take much risk. Stop the horse from winning if you can. I do



not want you to injure him ; on the contrary, I wish you to do it without bringing him down, if possible," said Kearney.

"Block him, get him shut in ; that is what you mean ?" said Milon.

"Yes, that is it."

"Supposing Culloden gets well away, and we have no chance of catching him ?"

"Try and prevent him from getting away."

"That is easier said than done," replied Milon. "Rigny, my mount, is a good beginner, and he is fast enough for a couple of miles, but he has no chance of staying the whole distance."

"If that is the case, you will have an opportunity to do as I wish in the early part of the race, which will be all the better. What sort of a horse is Chard ?"

"Good," said Moskor, who had made few observations, "but he has an awful temper, and he takes his jumps wildly. If he would only fence well he might have a chance."

"Just the sort of horse for our purpose," said Kearney. "If there is any interference you can put it down to the horse. I suppose his character is well known ?"

"It ought to be by this time," said Moskor ; "the beast has tried to break more than one rider's neck, and his own as well."

"Why did you accept such a mount ?" asked Kearney.

"Because I have to take what I can get. I cannot pick and choose like some fellows ; and if I did not ride him, some other jockey would."

Francis Kearney commenced to think fortune was favouring him, and that both jockeys and horses were suitable for his despicable plan.

After some further conversation he handed them notes for the amount agreed upon, and gave his promise to pay one hundred pounds to each if Satellite won.

"That's not a bad morning's work," said Moskor, when they were out of hearing.

"No, it is not," replied Milon. "What shall you do?"

"If there is no danger in it I'll carry out my bargain," said Moskor.

"So will I," replied Milon, "but I am not going to risk anything."

"Same here," replied Moskor. "He's a precious rogue."

"I have not met any worse, and I have come across a few of his sort in my time," said Milon.

"Have you managed it?" asked Tim Roley, when he rejoined Francis Kearney.

"It will be all right, I hope. They seem to understand what I said to them. I have promised them a hundred each if Satellite wins."

"Then they'll help you all they can, I'll bet," said Tim. "What about that diamond now?"

"You are very impatient," said Kearney.

"Rather! I want to have it set before the races."

"Cut a dash with it, eh?"

"That's it! There's nothing like a good diamond to fetch the girls."

"Mind the girls, or a girl, does not take it from you," said Kearney.

"Not much. I shall merely use it as a bait," said Tim.

"You are a deuced bad lot," said Kearney.

"There's a pair of us," sharply replied Tim.

## CHAPTER XXI

### HOT WORDS

COLONEL ILFORD had not visited Paris for some years, and it was with a feeling of satisfaction that he again found himself in the beautiful city. He was familiar with all its sights and sounds, and after sombre London the sparkling gaiety of the French capital revived his spirits. He crossed the Channel alone, Ralph having already arrived with Culloden, and gone on to Chantilly. Colonel Ilford went to the Hôtel de Louvre and there he waited for Ralph's arrival.

He was not kept long in suspense. Ralph came in time for dinner, and in the evening they went out for a walk.

It was a beautiful night, and the wide shaded walks of the Champs Elysées were thronged with loungers, enjoying the fresh air, and chatting gaily.

"Splendid place this," said the Colonel. "Why cannot they give us something like it in London? Life is sometimes a burden there; here everything tends to lighten the load of our everyday existence."

"Paris has its slums," said Ralph, "and I think they are worse than London's."

"That may be," replied Colonel Ilford. "I have

not had much experience of them. Slums have no attraction for me. They make me miserable, because I have no power to help the many wretched beings I see around me."

"I have seen a good deal of the seamy side of life in my travels," said Ralph. "There is a lot of injustice in the world, if we may judge by appearances."

"It will all come right in the end, I expect," said Colonel Ilford. "I cannot pretend to fathom the mysteries of life; I have not the brains or the time for it."

Ralph suggested that they should sit down, and the Colonel said:

"Not a bad idea; I feel rather lazy, or perhaps my limbs are getting stiff and old."

"The pace you walk at does not indicate either age or stiffness," replied Ralph.

"The Steeplechase comes off on Sunday," said Colonel Ilford.

"Are you as sanguine as ever about Culloden's chance?"

"Yes. He made a good passage, and is not in the least upset by the change. Your friend, Mr. Allen Coudert, thinks he is one of the best steeplechasers he has seen for some time."

"I am glad of that; he is a good judge," replied the Colonel. "Has he any fancy for any of the French horses?"

"He thinks Flambeau will be very hard to beat. He has seen him run most of his races, and has a very high opinion of him, and he says Berg is a fine rider."

"So I have heard," replied Colonel Ilford. "If we are beaten, I hope it will be by a French horse, for I do not want Satellite to win."

"Have you seen Kearney since your arrival?"

"No; but I am sure to come across him before Sunday."

"He does not know I am to ride Culloden, I suppose? It has not leaked out?" said Ralph.

"It is not at all likely. I am sure Night would say nothing, and he is the only one who knows. If I meet Kearney I shall soon find out."

"I fancy it will be a surprise to him when he sees me in the saddle," said Ralph.

"An unpleasant surprise. He saw how well you handled Fearless at Kempton," replied the Colonel.

Ralph wondered if it would be for the best to tell the Colonel about James Hyson's visit; he might be able to advise him. He decided in the affirmative.

"There is something I wish to have your opinion upon," said Ralph. "I know it will be valuable."

"Any advice I can give you are welcome to," he replied.

Ralph proceeded to relate, in as brief terms as possible, an account of his conversation with James Hyson, and all he had said about Francis Kearney and his wife. The Colonel was interested and surprised, more especially when he heard about the missing plate, and the conversation about it, and the diamonds. Ralph did not tell him that his sister was buried in The Folly grounds; he thought that had better be kept secret.

"Kearney must be an arrant scoundrel," said

Colonel Ilford indignantly ; " there is no other name for him. I wonder what has become of your sister? There is no telling what such a man may have done."

" I mean to call him to account when the time comes," said Ralph. " I could tell you more, Colonel, but this is not the time to make further disclosures. In case I have need of you, will you help me? "

" Willingly, my boy. You can depend upon me. If you get Francis Kearney in your clutches, take good care not to let him escape."

" I will not," replied Ralph. " Once I have him in my power, I will show him no mercy."

" He deserves none if he has injured your sister," replied the Colonel. " I have heard of James Hyson. He must be an extraordinary man; I should like to meet him."

" He will be here for the races," said Ralph, " and I will introduce you. He is a strange man, and I think I can rely upon him to help me."

Ralph was busy with Culloden during the next day or two, and did not come to Paris.

Colonel Ilford met Francis Kearney in the Rue de l'Opera, and asked him to dine with him. He cordially detested the man, but wished to find out from him what his opinion was about the Steeple-chase. Kearney thought it the best policy to accept and be cordial, although he would much have preferred to refuse. The dinner was not a success, for there was a considerable amount of restraint between them.

Afterwards, Colonel Ilford broached the subject of the race in which they were both interested.

"You are a clever man, Kearney," he said, "but that letter did not deceive me. You know Culloden has a remarkably good chance."

"I wrote the letter because I thought it was unfair to me to run the horse in such a race, more especially as the lease terminates the next day. I do not think he has any chance over such a course," said Kearney.

"You are mistaken, and instead of asking me to scratch Culloden, you ought to strike Satellite out and back him; you would have a chance of winning money then," replied Colonel Ilford.

Francis Kearney laughed harshly, as he said:

"I am not such a fool. Satellite is a better horse than Culloden, and he has been specially prepared for the race."

"So has Culloden," replied Colonel Ilford; "and a splendid preparation it has been. Of course, you know who has had him in hand?"

"Has he changed stables?" said Kearney, in some surprise.

"Yes; did not Loughton tell you?"

"No, he never named it. Perhaps he did not think it worth while," replied Kearney.

"Culloden has been at work on Bankshire Downs, and Ralph Raymond has superintended his preparation. I can assure you the horse was never better in his life," said the Colonel.

Francis Kearney was disagreeably surprised, but he did not think that Ralph knew much about preparing a horse for such a race as the Auteuil steeplechase.

"I do not think that enhances his chance," he



replied, with a sneer. "You had far better have left him where he was with a more experienced man."

"You will see whether I am right or otherwise on Sunday," said the Colonel. "What do you think of my jockey?"

"Arthur Night is all right; you will have nothing to complain of on that score."

"He thinks Culloden will win," said the Colonel.

"Most jockeys fancy their mounts; it is only natural they should do so."

"Are you very confident about Satellite?" asked the Colonel.

"Steeplechasing is risky, but I like my chance. I think he is sure to beat Culloden."

"I will bet you a level hundred Culloden beats him," said the Colonel.

"Is that all the faith you have in him?" said Kearney, with a peculiar smile.

"You can make it as much as you like," replied Colonel Ilford, who thought: "I wonder if he has the cash to pay up with if he loses?"

"I will lay you a level five hundred Satellite beats him," said Kearney.

"Very good," replied the Colonel. "One to win?"

"Yes."

The bet was duly recorded, and Francis Kearney thought he had made a very good wager, all things considered. He knew there would be several obstacles placed in the way of Culloden's winning, and he had no compunction in taking five hundred pounds from Colonel Ilford by fair means or foul.

"Do you think you are wise to ride Satellite?" asked Colonel Ilford.

"If I am on him I shall know he is a 'goer.' I would not trust many men to ride him."

"You have a bad opinion of jockeys."

"I have. They have had me more than once."

"And you have probably 'had' a good many people in your time," thought Colonel Ilford.

"I did not know your wife was a sister of Ralph Raymond's," said the Colonel, changing the subject quickly.

Francis Kearney scowled, and said :

"More's the pity! We might have got on better together if she had not had so much bad blood in her. All the Raymonds have been half mad; at least, one would imagine so, to judge by their conduct."

"You knew all about the family when you married her, I suppose?"

"Unfortunately, I did not, or I might have hesitated. I knew her name was Rosalind Raymond, but I did not know she was one of the Raymonds of The Folly until after we were married."

"That is not true," thought Colonel Ilford. "He does not speak as though it were true."

"We have been separated, by mutual consent, for some time," added Kearney. "I do not know where she is now. She may be dead for all I know," he said callously.

Colonel Ilford despised him, and his face showed his repugnance. Francis Kearney could not fail to notice it, and thick-skinned though he was, it cut him

to the quick. He vowed Culloden should not win the race, if he had to prevent it himself.

"How long have you known Ralph Raymond?" he asked.

"Ever since he was on Fearless at Kempton. He is a very nice young man. I do not see much trace of the bad blood you spoke about in him."

"Perhaps it has not come out yet," sneered Kearney.

"I do not think there is any to come out. He is a manly, honest fellow, and I would trust him in anything he undertook to do for me," said Colonel Ilford hotly.

"That's more than I would."

"Have you had any dealings with him?"

"No."

"Then how can you judge what his nature is?"

"Through his sister; one of the family is quite enough for me to know."

"If Ralph Raymond heard that remark, do you know what he would do?" said the irate Colonel, who had completely lost his temper.

"I neither know or care."

"He would horsewhip you, and, by Gad! sir, you would deserve it!" roared the Colonel.

Francis Kearney turned pale, and bit his lips.

"Did you invite me to dine with you in order to insult me?" he asked. "That ill becomes an officer, who is supposed to be a gentleman."

"I had no such intention; your conduct brought it upon yourself. I do not retract anything I have said."

"You shall repent this conduct," said Kearney savagely. "I allow no man to insult me with impunity."

"I am at your service at any time," said the Colonel, with dignity.

"Bah!" sneered Francis Kearney. "Do you think I am a coward, to fight an irate old man, who has already one foot in the grave?"

"One foot in the grave!" shouted the Colonel. "Leave me, sir, or I may be tempted to kick you out with the foot that is not in the grave."

"Next time we meet, Colonel Ilford, you will be sorry you made a fool of yourself. You can take it from me that Culloden has no chance of winning the race; I can safely promise you that," said Francis Kearney, as he left the room.

Colonel Ilford paced up and down, and when his temper cooled he said to himself:

"The blackguard is right, I have made a fool of myself. I ought to have been above bandying words with such a man. He is a scoundrel; a dangerous one, too! By Gad! when my young friend Ralph Raymond has the handling of him, I hope I may be there to see the fun."

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PADDOCK AT AUTEUIL

THE eventful day arrived—the day that was to decide the Auteuil Steeplechase, and the fortunes of Culloden, Satellite, and sundry other horses. It was a brilliant sunny Sunday in early June, and Paris was at her best, “with verdure clad.” Everything looked green, cool, and enchanting.

Sunday, the great day of the Parisiennes—a day they keep as a holiday, and forget the cares of the week! Blithe and gay is the throng that wends its way towards the woods of the Bois de Boulogne. Hundreds of children, with their parents, out for a picnic beneath the shady trees, from where they can watch the gay throng going to and from the races. Nowhere in the world can such a sight be seen, so picturesque, and suggestive of happiness and freedom from care. The dark shadow of everyday life may lurk behind the trees, but on a June Sunday it is cast in the shade by the brilliant sunshine, the merry laughter of children, the gay gossip of the boulevarders. There seems no place for sorrow; all is mirth. Care has vanished from faces, all of which are wreathed in smiles. The French love children, and enter into their light-hearted fun. The elders romp and play with the youngsters, and the woods

of the Bois re-echo to the shouts of laughter. There is much enjoyment at very little cost. Already the spacious road has been well watered. There is no dust. Sprays from the hydrants send showers of sparkling jets into the air, which descend upon the grass in a refreshing shower. Everything that money and lavish expenditure can accomplish is here. It costs much, it has to be paid for, but it is worth it. Paris may be heavily in debt, but she gives her creditors boundless delights, which wipe off a considerable amount of the loan.

It was an anxious day for Ralph Raymond. All the care and anxiety he had bestowed upon Culloden was to be put to the test. He did not think the horse would fail him, nor had he lost confidence in himself, but since Colonel Ilford had told him of the scene with Francis Kearney, and the wager he had made, he was uneasy.

Francis Kearney was a man who would take risks to win. Ralph knew sufficient of the mysteries of the course to be aware that there was foul play at work sometimes. Kearney had been in Paris a considerable time. Ralph learned from M. Coudert that he was intimate with "Tiger" Roley, and said M. Coudert :

"He is a fellow with a bad reputation. There is a clique of them, and they do some very barefaced things. I hope you will not be interfered with in your ride ; but if I were you, I should keep a sharp look-out."

"Do you know any of the jockeys who are riding?" asked Ralph.

"Several. Berg is a genuine man ; he always goes straight ; so is Lisle. Then Moskor and Milon are men of another stamp ; neither of them is to be trusted. Milon once did me out of a very nice stake by pulling my horse, but I could not make any complaint, as I had no direct evidence. That is where the hardship comes in."

"They have mounts in the race," said Ralph. "Moskor rides Chard, and Milon is on Rigny. Have they any chance ?"

"None, I should say. Rigny is a fair horse over from two to three miles, but Chard is a brute. He jumps his fences clumsily. Steer clear of them, is my advice," said Allen Coudert.

"I will not forget what you have said," replied Ralph. "I have been round the course twice. It is somewhat awkward, but I know how to ride over it."

"I can give you a hint about the water-jump," said M. Coudert. "Does your horse take off well, or does he rush his fences ?"

"He is a perfect jumper," replied Ralph.

"In that case, I advise you to ride hard at the water-jump. It will give you a clear course, and a big pull in the race. A horse that clears that jump well, I should say, gains at least five or six lengths each time, and that is a great advantage in a race."

"It is," replied Ralph, "and if I put on the pace there, it may force the running, and bring one or two down."

"Probably ; I have seen a clever jockey do that trick on more than one occasion. If you are alongside a couple of horses, and you suddenly put on a

spurt, it is ten to one the others will do likewise," said Allen Coudert.

Colonel Ilford came down on the Saturday, and talked the matter over with his friend.

"I have backed your horse to win me a good stake," said Allen Coudert, "and I am quite satisfied with my prospects. You have a good horse, and a good jockey. I like Mr. Raymond; he is a smart, gentlemanly man; there is no humbug about him."

Colonel Ilford was pleased at these remarks, and said:

"I am glad you have taken to him, but I knew you would. By the way, Francis Kearney thinks he is almost sure to win on Satellite. I have bet him a level 'monkey' I beat him."

"The money is as good as in your pocket. Kearney has no chance against Raymond. I have seen him school Culloden, and he can ride; there is no doubt about that. I have given him a hint to keep his eyes open in the race. There is no telling what Kearney may have been up to; he is in with a very bad set."

"He has not the pluck to risk anything in the race," replied Colonel Ilford.

"No, perhaps not; but he may get others to do his dirty work," said Allen Coudert.

"Ralph is able to take care of himself. I would not give much for the fellow's chance who attempted to ride him down," said the Colonel.

Ralph arrived at Auteuil early. He avoided the crowd, and secured a good place in the paddock for his horse. Culloden was not easily hustled or



frightened, but he thought it quite as well to avoid the crowd.

Ralph, although he had plenty to occupy his mind, was much struck with the beauty of the course. He thought the reserves resembled the private grounds of some rich man, more than a race-course. Everything was in perfect order, and in the right place.

Horses were arriving, and he looked them over keenly. He endeavoured to find out which were the likely runners in the Steeplechase, but without much success, until M. Coudert and Colonel Ilford joined him.

Allen Coudert knew most of the horses by sight, and pointed them out as they strolled round.

"Come over here ; that is Flambeau, the favourite," he said.

Flambeau was a big chestnut, with four white feet, and a star. He looked trained to the hour, a shade too fine, Ralph thought, if anything ; and he noted that he seemed hardly strong enough in his quarters for a four-mile race over such a course. Still, there was no denying the French crack was a gem, and one not to be under-estimated.

"A real good horse, I should say," was Colonel Ilford's remark, "and very fit ; he is a credit to his trainer."

"Yes ; Blaker knows how to train a jumper. He has met with a good deal of success since he came over here," said M. Coudert.

At the far side of the paddock a powerful brown horse was rearing and plunging, and creating a

disturbance; the lad seemed to have very little control over him.

"He'll break loose," said Ralph, "and then there will be the deuce to pay."

"See him," said M. Coudert. "That's Chard, the brute I told you about. Moskor rides him. He has commenced his pranks early; I do not envy him his mount."

Chard suddenly wrenched the bridle from the lad's hands, and the paddock gate being opened, dashed through it on to the course. Happily, there were not many people about, and the horse had a clear run. He galloped wildly about until he was eventually headed into the paddock again. The exertion seemed to have done him good, for he calmed down, and submitted to being led away.

"He's a nice beauty to run up against in a steeple-chase," laughed Ralph. "I shall take your advice, M. Coudert, and steer clear of him."

"I think he will have the water-jump to himself," said M. Coudert. "The others will avoid him if possible."

"There's Satellite, and Loughton with him," said Ralph, and they walked across to them.

"Here we are again, Colonel," said the trainer, laughing. "Have you bought Oliver Cromwell's chair yet?"

"Stop your chaffing, Loughton," said the Colonel, with a good-humoured smile. "That incident is closed. How's the horse?"

"Very well, and he made a good passage. Don't you think he looks fit?"

"Yes, as fit as he can be made. He does you credit, but he will not win," said Colonel Ilford.

Henry Loughton smiled; he was sanguine of success. He had no doubts about Satellite, but he had misgivings about Francis Kearney's riding.

Allen Coudert examined Satellite closely, and when he finished his inspection, said :

"I like him—he is a good horse, I am sure; but I prefer Culloden."

"Hear, hear!" said Colonel Ilford. "There's an independent opinion for you, Loughton."

Ralph took the trainer aside and said : "Has Mr. Kearney arrived yet?"

"I think so. I believe he is here somewhere; I fancy I saw him with a lady about half an hour ago," replied the trainer.

"I am sorry for her," said Ralph, "if she gets into his clutches."

"Arthur Night is here; I saw him last night," said Loughton.

Ralph smiled curiously, as he replied :

"He could not very well ride Culloden if he had not arrived."

"Why don't you ride him?" said the trainer.

"I wish I had the chance," replied Ralph. "I think I will ask the Colonel about it."

"Take my advice, and don't. When Colonel Ilford has made up his mind, there is no use in trying to induce him to alter his plans; it will be a dire failure," said Loughton.

"We shall see," replied Ralph, as he left him.

Francis Kearney drove to the course with Nora

Caone, much to the disgust of her stepfather, who blamed his wife for allowing it.

"How could I help it?" she replied. "You know what a self-willed girl she is, and you must not forget she is independent of us. I do not think you need be alarmed. Nora is in the habit of taking care of herself, and looking after her interests. I fancy Mr. Kearney has not made the conquest his conceit assures him he has. Nora may like him, but I am perfectly certain she is not in love with him. He has flattered her vanity by telling her he is riding Satellite, in order that she may have the pleasure of backing the winner; and he has actually asked her to give him a favour to wear in the race."

"Absurd, ridiculous nonsense!" snapped M. Henri. "I hope he will not win. Nothing would give me more satisfaction than to see him have a fall at the water-jump."

"That is unkind," she replied; "he has not injured you."

"The man is not a gentleman; he associates with rogues and swindlers. M. Coudert informed me such was the case," he answered.

"And is M. Coudert an authority?" asked his wife.

"He is; the best authority. I believe all he tells me about this Kearney, because he knows, and it is your duty to warn Nora."

"I will, but not to-day. Let her enjoy herself in her own way, and to-morrow I will enlighten her. If Mr. Kearney loses the race, or better still, if he comes to grief, and cuts a ridiculous figure, that will

do more to quench Nora's ardour than anything we can say," replied Madame Henri.

"Then I earnestly hope he may get a ducking in the water, and have to walk off the course in his wet, dirty clothes," said M. Henri.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### JOCKEYS CHANGED

NORA CAONE was dressed in exquisite taste, an Indian-red gauze mousseline, with red cloth cape, which set off her dark beauty, and her hat was a genuine Paris *chapeau*. It was entirely composed of *broderie Anglaise*, with frills of Valenciennes lace alternating, tipped with orange, and the crown composed of a soft *pouf* of white feathers, with a cluster of ospreys rising airily and gracefully out of the centre. She had bestowed much care upon her toilette, and the result was satisfactory. Her costume was conspicuous, and orange and red were Francis Kearney's colours. He took this as a favourable omen, not only for his success in the race, but also as a sign that she was not indifferent to him. He was very attentive, and the notice they attracted flattered his vanity.

"I feel more confident than ever of winning," he said. "It is very good of you to wear my colours, and I think they will be carried to victory."

"I hope so," she replied. "I have put a hundred pounds on your horse."

"Then I must do my best to win it for you."

"I like winning; I do not care to be beaten," she said.

"Most people like to win," he replied.

"Yes, I suppose so," she answered.

Her mother passed at the time, and Francis Kearney raised his hat, but she barely acknowledged the salutation.

"I am afraid my mother is not over-fond of you," laughed Nora.

"I do not know what I have done to offend her," he said.

"Nor do I ; that is why I always take your part," she replied.

When he left her to prepare for the race, she joined Madame Henri, who said :

"You look uncommonly well to-day, my dear ; far too good for your companion."

"I am wearing Mr. Kearney's colours," she said.

"I am glad you admire them."

"My dear child, you are doing a very foolish thing. It will attract a lot of attention ; everyone will notice it."

"And what if they do? I care nothing for public opinion."

"Then you ought," replied her mother sharply. "You have a position to maintain in society ; mind you do not lose it."

"I have my friends, and they will not be so particular as you are, mother."

Madame Henri thought it better to let the conversation drop, and they were soon engrossed in criticising the many charming ladies, and their varied dresses.

Francis Kearney dressed for the race. He had a

new silk jacket—a brilliant red—with an orange sash and cap. He thought he looked exceedingly well in it, and felt very satisfied with himself as he walked across the paddock to Satellite and his trainer.

“Tiger” Roley stopped him before he reached them, and said hurriedly:

“Chard is in a devil of a temper; keep clear of him. I fancy if Culloden runs up against him there will be a smash. Your horse looks well—about the best of the lot; but you have Flambeau to beat.”

“I shall beat him, never fear,” was the reply, as he walked on. He had no desire to attract attention by conversing with Roley.

“Everything ready?” he asked the trainer.

“Yes; and if you do as I wish, you will ride a waiting race for the first two miles.”

“Nonsense, Loughton! You know as well as I do that Satellite’s forte is staying, and that he can gallop the full distance at a sound pace. I shall use my own judgment how to ride him,” replied Kearney.

“You can do as you please, of course,” replied Henry Loughton, somewhat nettled at his remark. “I know what Satellite is capable of, and I merely gave you a hint as to the best way to ride him. He is not as safe a jumper as Culloden, and if you bustle him in the early part of the race he may blunder. Let him warm to his work gradually, and I think he will win; above all, do not rush him at that water-jump.”

Francis Kearney shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say: “I know quite as much as you do about it, and perhaps more.”



Henry Loughton was looking across the paddock, and gave an exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?" asked Kearney.

"I thought Arthur Night was to ride Culloden," the trainer replied.

"So he is. Colonel Ilford told me he had engaged him," said Kearney.

"There he is," replied Loughton, pointing to the jockey; "but those are not Colonel Ilford's colours."

Francis Kearney was dumfounded. It was certainly Arthur Night, and he wore a black and white halves jacket.

"What does it mean?" he asked excitedly. "These are Rigny's colours. Milon was to ride him."

"Shall I go and ask him?"

"Yes; and be quick."

Henry Loughton went towards the jockey, who greeted him with a smile.

"I thought you were to ride Culloden?" said the trainer.

"Did you, Henry? So other people thought, but you see you are all wrong."

"But Colonel Ilford engaged you to ride for him!"

"Certainly; but we had a proper understanding, and I am quite satisfied."

"It seems a strange proceeding," said Loughton.

"Not at all! I was merely engaged in case Mr. Raymond was unable to ride," replied Night.

"Ralph Raymond!" exclaimed the astonished trainer. "Does he ride Culloden?"

"Yes; it has been understood all along that he should do so."

"By Jove! it's a funny business," said Loughton.

"Where does the fun come in?" asked the jockey, and Loughton gave no answer. "I had no mount in the race, so Colonel Ilford spoke to M. Coudert about it, and he secured me a ride on Rigny. I don't think he has much of a show, but I shall not have made my journey in order to look on," said Arthur Night, as he walked away.

"What does he say?" asked Francis Kearney, when Loughton returned.

"He was engaged to ride Culloden only in the event of Ralph Raymond being unable to have the mount," replied Loughton.

Francis Kearney gasped, and staggered back as though he had received a blow. The trainer looked at him in astonishment.

"Raymond rides him! Ralph Raymond!" he said, in a hollow voice. "It's a lie. I don't believe it."

"Ask him yourself," said the trainer indignantly.

Francis Kearney recovered his composure with an effort, and said more calmly, although with a tremor in his voice:

"It is an underhand piece of work. Ilford has no right to change his jockey at the last moment."

"He has a perfect right if he wishes," quietly replied the trainer. "And I think he has made a mistake. Arthur Night has had more experience than Raymond, and it is all in your favour this change being made. You ought to beat Raymond, but I had my doubts about your being equal to tackling Arthur Night."

"Perhaps you are right," said Kearney. "Yes; I

ought to be more than a match for Ralph Raymond, or any of the brood. Curse these Raymonds! They have been the bane of my life."

Henry Loughton wondered at his vehemence, and the savage tone in which he uttered the words. He thought Mrs. Kearney must have had a bad time with him.

"There's no mistake about who rides Culloden," said the trainer. "Ralph Raymond has on the pink jacket, and he is with Colonel Ilford and M. Coudert."

Francis Kearney saw them, and his heart quailed within him. There was more than mere chance in this arrangement. Who was responsible for it? Ralph Raymond? If so, there was some deep meaning in it. What reason had he for wishing to ride in the race? With a shudder, Francis Kearney thought of another ride in which Ralph Raymond had been his opponent, and in which he had beaten him, and on the horse he was now about to ride. The five-barred gate, the dull, damp avenue of trees, the moss-grown drive, the fitful light of the moon, came vividly before him.

Another scene flashed across his mind with awful meaning, but he thrust it from him with all the will-power at his command. His nerves were shaken; his confidence in himself was well-nigh lost. He saw defeat looming ahead, and something worse, but what was to happen he could not tell.

Henry Loughton watched him keenly, and saw the change. "He's nervous," he thought. "He'll lose his head in the race. I never saw him like this before. I wonder what is the cause?"

"You must pull yourself together, Mr Kearney," he said. "Ours is the next race. What has upset you? Can I get you anything?"

"Yes," said Kearney eagerly; "a pint of champagne. I feel shivery. Can't make it out at all; it will soon pass off."

Loughton hurried away full of misgivings as to the result of the race, although an hour ago he was confident of Satellite's success.

"It's the most curious thing I ever saw," he muttered. "The man has completely changed; he looks afraid. By Jove! I believe he is afraid; but of what?"

He might well ask himself that question, and had he but known the real cause, he would not have wondered at the change in Francis Kearney. He had hit upon the truth. Francis Kearney was afraid, and with good reason. Conscience made a coward of him; a just retribution, he felt, was about to overtake him, and in this frame of mind he was to ride in the Steeplechase, over the severe Auteuil course. He knew it would require all his nerve and resources to win, even to get the course without a mishap, and he was trembling in every limb—shaking as with ague. He had ridden horses often enough to know that if he lost his courage and rode nervously the feeling would be imparted to Satellite.

Loughton returned with the champagne, which he drank eagerly; and as the wine circulated in his body he felt revived, and his courage returned.

Arthur Night was on Rigny, therefore Milon could not help him; he would have to rely solely upon

Moskor and his own cunning. It was a stroke of bad luck, but he had not lost yet, nor did he intend to. The wine effected its purpose, and he felt more himself again. He saw Nora Caone coming towards him, and pulled himself together. He must not show any sign of the white feather before her. She greeted him with a bright smile, and said :

"I have come to wish you good luck before you mount. Be sure and win for *my* sake."

"I would do anything to win your favour," he said.

"How well Satellite looks," she replied, ignoring, although not displeased at, his remark.

"He is as fit as my clever trainer can make him," said Kearney. "This is Mr. Loughton ; the credit for Satellite's condition is due to him."

She held out her hand, and as Loughton touched it he thought :

"She is a fine woman. I wonder if she knows he is married? If not, he's worse than I took him to be."

"Will Satellite win, Mr. Loughton?" she asked.

"I hope so; I think he will, if Mr. Kearney rides his best."

"And that you are sure to do," she said, turning to him.

"Yes, for your sake," he replied, in a low voice.

"And for your own," she thought, as she smiled at him. Miss Nora Caone was a lady of keen perception.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A MARVELLOUS JUMP

JAMES HYSON was on the course, but Ralph had not seen him, and he wondered if he had kept his promise. Probably he had ; he did not look like a man who would break his word. As he had not shown himself, he had no doubt a good reason.

Ralph had no time to trouble about James Hyson now. The horses were all ready, and the jockeys were mounting.

Culloden stood quietly by until Ralph was in the saddle, when he lashed out playfully, and showed he was in good spirits.

Colonel Ilford shook hands with him, and wished him good luck, as also did M. Coudert. As he rode out of the paddock he caught sight of James Hyson, who said :

“Beware of Chard and Moskor. I hope you will win.”

“A strange warning,” thought Ralph ; “it bears out all M. Coudert said to me. Chard will not have much chance of interfering with me.”

He had made up his mind how to ride the race. The horse he had to beat was Satellite ; he determined Francis Kearney should not win, no matter what happened.

The runners numbered fifteen, and most of the best French jumpers were started. M. Figes handled the flag, and they followed him in the parade. Chard again showed temper, and the starter, when they were lining up, gave a word or two of caution to Moskor, telling him he must be careful and not let his headstrong mount interfere with the others.

"Keep him on the outside," said the starter, "or he will lame something."

Moskor had no objections to this. He meant to get away well, and as quickly as possible range up alongside Culloden.

Satellite was somewhat fractious, and bumped against Culloden.

"Give me a clear berth," said Kearney angrily, but received no reply from Ralph, who completely ignored him. This did not tend to soothe his temper, and he handled Satellite roughly, the horse resenting it.

After one or two breaks away the flag fell, and Chard getting on his legs first, Moskor pulled him across the course into the middle of the field. Kearney was alongside him, and they were slightly ahead of the others.

"Remember what you have to do," said Kearney, as Moskor went past him.

Ralph was well placed alongside Flambeau, whose jockey wore a tricolour jacket.

The immense crowd cheered as the flag fell, and they started on their journey. The whole of the horses jumped well, and they were all close up when the water-jump in front of the Stands was neared for the first time. Chard flew over in reckless fashion,

but landed safely, although he stumbled and lost ground.

Francis Kearney remembered what his trainer had said, and steadied Satellite for the jump.

Nora Caone had her glasses levelled on the red and orange jacket, and her heart beat fast with excitement as she watched Satellite near the big jump.

"Look, mother, how well he rides!" she said enthusiastically. "I think he will win."

"There is ample time for him to get a ducking yet," growled M. Henri, a remark Nora affected to ignore, although she heard and resented it.

"Here comes Flambeau," said Allen Coudert, as the conspicuous French colours neared the water. "He's a first-class fencer ; watch him !"

Flambeau rose at the fence, and cleared the water in gallant style, landing well on the far side. The crowd cheered the favourite, and the popular jockey riding him.

Ralph Raymond on Culloden followed. The horse pricked his ears and made a magnificent leap, even better than Flambeau. The hundreds of Englishmen on the course gave a rousing cheer. The pink jacket was as popular with them as the tricolour with the Frenchmen.

"Splendid !" exclaimed M. Coudert. "It could not have been better."

Colonel Ilford was pleased, and his usually placid countenance showed how keenly he was enjoying the race.

"Ralph rides well, does he not ?"



"Yes, far better than Kearney; he is much firmer in his seat," replied Allen Coudert.

Round the bends they swept, the course being almost in the shape of the figure eight, and as they came in view again beyond the paddock, several horses were missing. Moskor had pulled Chard back, and was biding his time. Francis Kearney was still in the front rank, headed by a couple of outsiders.

"Here they come!" said Colonel Ilford.

Ralph Raymond saw the yellow jacket of Chard's rider close in front of him, and thought of Hyson's warning. He could not, however, alter his course, for Satellite was just ahead of him on one side, and Flambeau was still close up with him. He saw Moskor glance back before he reached the water.

Chard was at the best of times an uncertain jumper; he had been known to try and run out, and even to refuse a fence when apparently going well.

"He's just behind me," thought Moskor. "Now's my time. Satellite is clear on the other side, so is Flambeau."

Over flew the leaders, scrambling as they landed, but not throwing their riders.

Again Satellite cleared the water, much to Nora's joy, and Francis Kearney's hopes were high.

Then a terrific shout came from the crowd, and thousands of people held their breath, wondering what would happen.

Chard almost stopped dead before he reached the fence, and Culloden was not far behind him.

Colonel Ilford dropped his glasses with a clang, and said:

"We're done for, Coudert! Culloden will never clear him."

"That's Moskor's work," replied M. Coudert angrily.

Ralph saw the danger; what was he to do? He had no time to think. Chard was right in front of him, almost on top of the fence.

Without a moment's warning Chard nipped sharply round, and his hind quarters were level alongside the bushes. On came Culloden, and it looked a hundred to one he would dash into Chard, and both men and horses would roll together into the water, through the terrific shock of the collision. Almost by a miracle something happened which fairly took the spectators' breath away.

Colonel Ilford clutched M. Coudert's arm, and said excitedly :

"He'll be killed! He'll be killed!"

Ralph took in the situation at a glance; he had never been cooler in his life. He drove Culloden along at his top speed. The horse did not flinch; he knew the pluck of his rider, and responded to it. The gallant horse took off just as he reached Chard's quarters. Not a sound was heard as the vast crowd watched the wonderful leap.

Culloden cleared Chard, cleared the fence, almost cleared the water; it would have been impossible for him to get quite over. When the horse was in the air, over the water, Ralph saw what would happen, and drew his feet clear of the stirrups. His station and ranching experiences now stood him in good stead. He stuck his knees firmly in, tucked under his feet, and waited.

Culloden struggled bravely, but it was too much for him. He rolled over on his side, as he scrambled out of the water with Ralph still on him. In another moment he was on his legs again, and, marvellous to relate, Ralph was on his back. He had eased the horse as he fell, and when he rose clung to him again. It was a trick he had learned in Mexico, but little thought he would ever have to make use of it at Auteuil. His feet were quickly in the stirrups, and Culloden went on after the leaders at a great pace, just as though nothing out of the common had happened.

Then the crowd realised what an extraordinary performance it was, and cheer after cheer burst forth from French and English alike. The pluck and daring of the thing, the grand recovery made by Culloden, the skilful way in which Ralph retained his seat, filled the multitude with enthusiasm. The horses behind jumped clear of Culloden and Ralph, and they were unhurt.

Moskor could hardly believe his eyes. He saw it all plainly, and knew his dastardly scheme had failed. Perhaps not entirely; Ralph had lost a lot of ground by the fall. It was no use continuing the race on Chard. He turned the horse's head, and rode back towards the paddock. A storm of howls, hisses, and threats greeted him, and he knew public opinion judged him as he ought to be judged.

Colonel Ilford marvelled at Ralph's daring and skill. Win or lose, he felt both man and horse had done their best in a wonderful way.

Culloden was now last, and seemed out of the

race. Ralph, however, did not think so, for the horse was going as well as ever.

Francis Kearney understood something of what had happened, but not all. Glancing back, he saw no signs of the pink jacket, but the favourite was close behind him, and going well. He was glad Ralph Raymond had very little chance of winning. Satellite was full of running, and if he got over the water the next time, all would be well.

At the next fence one of the leaders came down, and Kearney saw with inward satisfaction another runner out of his way. Berg on Flambeau was quite at his ease. He had ridden the horse before, and had confidence in him. He knew if it came to a finish he could outride Kearney.

The chief interest in the race was now centred in Culloden. The sympathy of the crowd was with Ralph, for sporting folk, no matter their nationality, dearly love pluck, and admire fair play. Moskor's character was pretty well known, and on all sides people remarked that they hoped he would be punished this time.

Ralph was forcing Culloden along ; it had to be done if he meant to make up his lost ground.

He wished to get alongside Francis Kearney ; he had something to say to him if he did. Gradually the pink jacket crept up, slowly but surely. It was an uphill task, but Ralph stuck at it, and so did the horse.

Culloden was none the worse for his fall ; Ralph fancied it had made him savage, and anxious to catch up with the leaders.

"By all that's wonderful," said Colonel Ilford, "he has a chance, I believe. Look how he is creeping up!"

"I never saw anything like this before," replied Allen Coudert. "If Culloeden wins, there will be a scene such as Auteuil has never witnessed."

"It seems impossible," said Colonel Ilford, "but something tells me he will do it after all."

## CHAPTER XXV

### AT THE WATER-JUMP

RALPH RAYMOND'S spirits rose as he felt Culloden bounding under him with elasticity and freedom. The horse strode along at a great rate, and jumped the fences without an effort. Culloden was on his mettle, so was his rider, and their dual determination assisted them considerably to make up the lost ground. When they were turning into the straight, Ralph closed with Arthur Night on Rigny.

"Thought you were out of it," said Night.

"Not yet," was Ralph's reply as Culloden passed him.

Night's practised eyes saw there was plenty of running left in Culloden, and he thought to himself: "He'll not be far out yet, if he does not actually win."

Francis Kearney was close behind Rouge Rose, a rank outsider, running remarkably well. Almost level with him was the favourite; thundering along at a terrific pace, five or six lengths behind, came Culloden.

Cheers greeted Ralph as he drew near the Stands. The way in which Culloden had made up his ground was almost beyond belief.

Ralph saw the red and orange not far ahead, and

he clenched his teeth, and sent Culloden on faster and faster.

"He is taking too much out of him," said the Colonel. "The water-jump will bring him down."

"I do not think so," replied Allen Coudert. "A beaten horse could not gallop like that; there is plenty left in both of them."

They were nearing the jump now.

Francis Kearney knew this was a critical moment for him. He looked well ahead, and did not give a thought to Ralph.

Berg on Flambeau was nearly level with him; both horses were going well.

Kearney heard a sound close behind him, the thud of galloping hoofs, a horse travelling at a great pace.

What devil prompted the thought in his mind? He fancied he was racing down that dull, desolate drive again, with Ralph Raymond after him. His hands trembled on the reins, and Satellite felt it.

Suddenly he heard a shout, and the words: "Remember the ride at The Folly! Remember Rosalind! I'll beat you this time!" and he reeled in the saddle.

"Kearney's beaten, if his horse is not," said Colonel Ilford excitedly.

Francis Kearney completely lost his presence of mind. The voice, the words unnerved him. The jump was close in front. He shut his eyes, and the reins hung loose.

In another moment Satellite crashed into the fence, toppled over, and man and horse were

struggling in the water, as Ralph Raymond, on Culloden, flew over them with a tremendous leap.

Again the cheers rolled over the course.

Nora Caone sat down, half fainting; it was a terrible spill.

"I am glad he has received a ducking," said M. Henri gleefully.

"That's a nasty spill," said Colonel Ilford. "He seemed to lose his head."

Francis Kearney was not hurt. He contrived to get clear of Satellite, and the horse struggled out riderless, and galloped after the others.

Assistance was at hand, and Francis Kearney was hauled out of the water. He looked a sorry object. His face and hands were covered with dirt, and the gaudy red and orange jacket was almost indistinguishable. When it was seen he was unhurt, a roar of laughter greeted him, he looked such a woebegone, draggled object, and he was decidedly unpopular. Nora Caone, as she watched him, did not pity him. He had disgraced her and himself by this ignominious exhibition. She heard a gentleman behind her remark :

"He lost his head. I never saw a clumsier bit of work. He deserved the ducking. It was not the horse's fault. Satellite would have cleared it all right with a man on his back."

"I suppose you backed him?" replied his friend.

"I did, worse luck! I ought to have known better, with such a duffer as Kearney up; it is my own fault, and serves me right."

Not pleasant remarks for Nora Caone to hear, and



she was wearing Francis Kearney's colours. She was angry with him—unreasonably, of course ; but it was very mortifying to her to see the red and orange covered with mud, and Francis Kearney walking along with the water dripping off him. It was most undignified. She would have given anything to be able to change her costume ; she fancied everyone was looking at her, and making uncharitable remarks.

Her mother judged what was passing in her mind, and did not add fuel to the fire by making sarcastic comments.

M. Henri, however, had no such regard for Nora's feelings.

"Your champion has made a nice mess of it," he said. "It serves him right. I knew he was no rider."

"It would give me much satisfaction to see you in a similar predicament," retorted Nora. "Although, now I come to think of it, you could not look more insignificant than you do at present."

"How can you make such rude remarks !" said her mother.

"Is it rudeness to speak the truth ?" replied Nora.

M. Henri was deeply offended, but he remained silent. He had felt the lash of Nora's tongue before, and knew how it stung.

Flambeau was now within a couple of lengths of Rouge Rose, and Culloden was four or five lengths behind the pair ; then came Rigny, who had run much better than his owner expected, Minerva and

Azay being next, and the remainder of the field hopelessly out of it.

It looked a good thing for the favourite, and the Frenchmen were jubilant. Already there were shouts for Flambeau. Berg heard them, and smiled confidently ; he felt certain of winning. By some mischance, however, Flambeau blundered at the last fence, and before he was fairly going again, Culloden was on his quarters, with Rouge Rose well up, and Rigny and Minerva a dozen lengths away.

The excitement was at its highest pitch, and the crowd eagerly pushed forward on to the rails to catch a glimpse of the finish.

Henry Loughton saw Satellite fall, and knew it was not the horse's fault. He thought it very hard luck that, after all he had done for the horse, Francis Kearney should so hopelessly blunder and throw away the race.

"Just my luck," he said. "With a good rider up he would have won."

The horses came along the straight at a fast pace, considering it was the finish of a severe race. Culloden was now level with the favourite, and Ralph and Berg were straining every nerve for the mastery.

"He's an artist if he can beat Berg," said Allen Coudert ; "and he looks like doing it."

Colonel Ilford was too excited to make any reply. As a rule he was calm and cool when watching a race, but this Steeplechase was so crammed full of incident that for once his coolness deserted him, and

in addition, he stood to win a larger stake than he had ever done before.

His eyes were riveted on the pink jacket and white belt, and the tricolour dancing alongside.

Rouge Rose was beaten, and fell back, and Arthur Night was riding Rigny for all he was worth to get the place for which the horse had been well backed.

The cheering and shouting was deafening, and the names of Culloden and Flambeau were heard all over the course.

It was a desperate finish, and plainly showed that had all gone well with Culloden he would have won easily. The spill and the forced pace for the latter part of the distance had taken it out of him considerably, and Ralph felt him faltering. At the same time, he noticed Flambeau swerve, and knew Berg's mount was in a similar plight.

The French jockey used his whip freely now, and Flambeau struggled gamely on.

Ralph never liked to punish a horse, but he knew it was necessary to force Culloden to do his best. He gave him two quick, stinging cuts with the whip, and although the horse ran wide, he still gained ground.

They were hard at it now—a regular ding-dong finish. Neck and neck they raced, amidst a tumult of noise. The tension was great, and Colonel Ilford's face was a study; his mouth quivered, and his hand shook on his stick.

Then as he saw his colours creep ahead inch by inch he waved his hat, and shouted:

“Culloden wins! Culloden wins!”

The people near him smiled at the gallant old soldier's vehemence.

"That's Colonel Ilford," said one; "he owns Culloden. No wonder he is excited."

"Fine old fellow, is he not?"

"Yes; every inch a soldier."

Now the cheers and cries broke out with redoubled vigour. The pink jacket was a clear length ahead of the tricolour, and Culloden was winning. How the people shouted! From hundreds of sturdy Englishmen came the cry of:

"Culloden! Culloden!"

Berg knew Flambeau was beaten, but he fought it out to the bitter end.

Francis Kearney, tearing off his wet clothes in the jockeys' room, heard the shouts for Culloden. His face was pale and drawn, and he shivered all over; but not with cold, or from the shock of his fall. Those words of Ralph Raymond rang in his ears: "Remember the ride at The Folly! Remember Rosalind! I'll beat you this time!" He could not get rid of them.

"Remember Rosalind!"

He felt a crisis was at hand, that justice was dogging his footsteps, and retribution was near.

The race was nearly over. Culloden galloped on to the end, and amidst a scene of unparalleled excitement Colonel Ilford's colours were victorious, and Flambeau had to put up with second place, while Arthur Night just managed to push Rigny past Rouge Rose and secure third position.

On all sides Culloden's was acknowledged to be a

wonderful performance, and when Ralph Raymond went to weigh in, the cheers broke out again and again.

It was a proud moment for Ralph. He had won a great victory and a big stake; but above all, he was fiercely delighted at the success of his plan to defeat Francis Kearney and Satellite. He had seen Kearney reel in the saddle as he heard his words, and it was with grim satisfaction he saw him lying in the water with the struggling horse. He hoped Francis Kearney was not killed; he had a score to settle with him before his death took place.

Colonel Ilford showered congratulations upon him, and on all sides there was a desire to make much of him. Ralph Raymond was the hero of the hour. Bright eyes looked kindly upon him, almost caressed him, and the men openly expressed their admiration of his riding. It was a triumph for all concerned with Culloden, and it was a long time before the excitement subsided.

As Francis Kearney was dressing, he happened to look towards the door, and there he saw James Hyson smiling at him blandly. Something told him there was danger lurking behind that smile, and that the net was closing fast round him. Could he escape it? He determined to try. He would show Ralph Raymond it was dangerous to measure swords with him.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE APPOINTMENT

FRANCIS KEARNEY had no desire to meet James Hyson at this particular moment, but he could not avoid it.

Hyson stood near the doorway, evidently bent on waiting until he came out of the room. There was nothing for it but to put on the best face possible, and appear at his ease. He finished dressing, and stepped outside.

"I am sorry you had such an unlucky ride," said Hyson. "At one time Satellite appeared to hold a very good chance."

"He would have won had Ralph Raymond acted like a gentleman."

Hyson looked surprised.

"I saw nothing wrong in his riding," he said.

"Perhaps not, but I did. The yell he gave, and the way he shouted at me at the water-jump, was quite sufficient to frighten a horse like Satellite; it was a despicable trick, no doubt done on purpose to cause an accident," said Kearney savagely.

"What did he say? Shall you repeat it to the stewards?"

"I did not hear what he said, but he made noise

enough to raise the dead," replied Kearney, and the last words made him turn pale.

"To raise the dead?" said James Hyson inquiringly. "That's a curious expression."

"A common one; I see nothing curious about it."

"I have good news for you," said James Hyson.

"Indeed; what is it?"

"I think I shall find your wife before long."

Kearney started; he wished James Hyson at the other end of the world.

"Have you a clue?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Robbery."

Francis Kearney looked like a rat caught in a trap, without hope of escape.

"I don't understand. My wife had nothing of much value, that I am aware of," he said.

"No diamonds?" asked Hyson quietly.

"Diamonds!" exclaimed Kearney, who was now on the alert. "Absurd! If she had possessed valuable diamonds I should have known of it."

"You did know; you sold them in the Rue de la Paix—some of them," said Hyson quietly.

Francis Kearney made a step towards him, his eyes blazing with fury and fear.

"Raise a hand against me, and I place the matter in the hands of the police," said James Hyson coolly.

"You lie! They were not her diamonds; I received them from South Africa."

"So the purchaser informed me. I did not un-deceive him. But you did not receive them from

South Africa. They were your wife's property ; how they came into your possession you know best."

"I thought you were assisting me to find my wife?"

"There is no occasion for it ; you know where she is, and *I* want to know."

"Damn you! what business is it of yours, you meddling fool?" said Kearney.

"And I shall meddle to some purpose, Francis Kearney. I mean to find your wife, alive or dead," said Hyson.

"Ask Ralph Raymond where she is," sneered Kearney. "I think he knows, but he dare not tell you."

Hyson laughed as he replied :

"A likely story, is it not? He is very anxious to find her, and I will help him."

"Ask him where she is," repeated Kearney. "I have no time to bandy words with you," and he walked quickly away. He had caught sight of Ralph coming towards them.

James Hyson also saw him, and went to meet him.

"Thanks for your warning," said Ralph. "Chard nearly did for me. It was a dastardly trick. I have lodged a complaint for foul riding against Moskor."

"And I hope he will meet with his deserts," said Hyson.

"You were talking to Francis Kearney. What did he say?"

"Told me a curious story about you shouting at him, and frightening Satellite at the water-jump."

Ralph laughed harshly.



"He told you the truth. But I did not frighten Satellite ; I frightened him."

James Hyson felt the mystery surrounding Ralph Raymond and Francis Kearney and his wife was thickening.

"What did you say to him ?"

"I will tell you to-night, if you will meet me with Colonel Ilford at the Hôtel de Louvre at half-past eight."

"I will be there," said Hyson.

"I must see Kearney," said Ralph, "before he leaves the paddock."

"There he is, with his trainer," said Hyson, and Ralph left him.

"You beat us, Mr. Raymond," said Loughton, as he came up. "If Mr. Kearney had kept cool, I think Satellite would have won ; he ran remarkably well."

"He did," replied Ralph, "and as you say, if Mr. Kearney had kept cool he might have won. Something upset him. I saw that as Satellite took the fence."

"It was your infernal howling did it," said Francis Kearney savagely. "You screeched loud enough to frighten any horse."

"I did not frighten Flambeau or Berg," quietly replied Ralph.

"Surely you did not try and startle Mr. Kearney by shouting at him ?" said Henry Loughton.

"You are mistaken ; such was my intention, and I succeeded."

"Then I call it an ungentlemanly action, to say the least of it," replied Loughton hotly.

"Ask him what I said," replied Ralph.

"How the devil do I know? You made a horrible noise, but I did not hear your words," said Kearney.

"You did," said Ralph. "Shall I repeat them to Loughton?"

Francis Kearney made no reply, and his trainer looked at him. There was something he could not understand.

"If you knew the truth, you would not blame me," Ralph said to the trainer.

"You are the last man I should have suspected of doing anything wrong," replied Loughton. "Naturally, I am rather sore at Satellite's defeat."

"Of course," said Ralph. "I am sorry, for your sake, he did not win, but not for his owner's. May I speak to you for a few minutes on a private matter?" he said to Francis Kearney.

They stepped aside, and Ralph said :

"You must meet me at the Hôtel de Louvre at half-past eight to-night."

"Must!" exclaimed Kearney, with a harsh laugh.

"I said must, and I know you will be there."

"And if I decline to obey such a demand, what then?"

"You will be arrested before the night is out."

Francis Kearney laughed unpleasantly. "Have you no fear of the law yourself?"

"None."

"Have you done nothing contrary to the law?"

"No."

"I say you have, and that you dare not touch me," said Kearney.

"I dare, and will. I have nothing to fear, but you have." Ralph stepped close to him, and said fiercely: "You assassin! you cold-blooded murderer!"

Francis Kearney recoiled from him, and looked hastily round.

"You shall answer for this insult," he said. "If you have travelled, so have I, and I know how to deal with such a man as yourself."

"I am glad," replied Ralph. "It is the same with me. I want to avenge my sister; now you understand me."

Francis Kearney laughed as he replied: "Your sister! I did not know you had a sister."

Ralph could have struck him down where he stood, but he controlled himself, and said:

"My sister was your wife."

"She was not."

Ralph turned pale. Was he to believe this? No; it was a lie—a foul lie!

"You blackguard! that is another insult I have to wipe out. You will be at the Hôtel de Louvre at 8.30 to-night," he said.

"For what purpose?"

"You will know when you meet me."

"I must know now."

"I shall not tell you."

"Then I will not meet you," said Kearney.

"Is that your decision?"

"Yes."

Ralph turned to walk away.

"Where are you going?" asked Francis Kearney.

"To see Colonel Ilford. The chief of the police is a friend of his," replied Ralph.

"And what of that?"

"Through Colonel Ilford's influence, I shall have you arrested before you leave the course."

"You dare not!"

Ralph shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply. He waited a few moments, and then walked away.

Francis Kearney called him back.

"If I come to the Hôtel de Louvre to-night, you will give me your word that there is no plot against me?"

"I will. Everything you agree to shall be of your own free will," replied Ralph.

"Then I will be there."

"You have decided wisely," replied Ralph.

Colonel Ilford was so delighted with Culloden's victory that he was anxious to purchase the horse.

"I wonder if we can induce Kearney to sell him?" he said.

"I do not think there will be much difficulty about that," replied Ralph. "He is hard hit, and the money will be useful. Offer him a thousand, and I think he will accept it—I am sure he will. He is to meet us at the Hôtel de Louvre at half-past eight to-night, when we can arrange it. You once promised to help me if I required your assistance."

"I did, and I am ready to do so. When do you require my services?"

"To-night; and for two or three days after."

"Is it anything to do with Francis Kearney?"

"Yes. James Hyson will be with us to-night. I can rely upon him."

"A regular mystery," said Colonel Ilford, with a smile.

"A sad mystery," replied Ralph; "but you will hear all about it to-night."

Francis Kearney searched for Nora Caone, but could not find her, and he came to the conclusion that she had returned with her mother.

Everything was going against him. Would it not be better to make a bolt of it—to get out of the country? Ralph Raymond had some scheme on hand that meant utter ruin, if not worse, to him.

Kearney was not devoid of a certain kind of courage, and he hated Ralph.

He decided he would keep his appointment at the Hôtel de Louvre; afterwards he could consider what was best to be done. He was short of money, and Satellite's defeat was a heavy blow.

There might be some loophole of escape for him. He was not going to let Ralph Raymond have matters all his own way.

At the Hôtel de Louvre Colonel Ilford, Ralph Raymond, and James Hyson sat in a private sitting-room. The clock pointed to twenty-five minutes past eight.

"Do you think he will come?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes, I am sure of it," answered Ralph, and as he spoke steps were heard outside. There was a knock at the door.

Colonel Ilford said, "Come in," and Francis Kearney entered the room, looking at the three men with an air of assurance that was far from genuine.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### FRANCIS KEARNEY'S CONFESSION

"QUITE a family gathering," sneered Francis Kearney. "I had no idea I was to have the pleasure of meeting Colonel Ilford and James Hyson."

"It is necessary for my purpose they should be here ; I require witnesses," said Ralph.

"Indeed ! Is a revelation to take place ?"

"Yes ; a serious charge will be made against you, and you will have to defend yourself," replied Ralph.

"This is not a court of justice ?"

"It is," answered Ralph, "for the time being. I think you would prefer to face it in preference to the criminal court. You may as well take a chair ; the interview will not be brief."

Francis Kearney sat down, feeling very uncomfortable. He understood what was coming, and he hardly knew how to meet it. He must be on his guard, and seize upon every point in his favour.

Colonel Ilford was interested to learn why Ralph had arranged this meeting, and anxiously awaited developments. James Hyson was in possession of some of the facts, but not all ; he was to be thoroughly startled before the evening was past.

"I have a story to tell you, and a charge to make

against Francis Kearney," said Ralph, in a slow, firm voice. "My story is long and painful, but I will make it as brief as possible. When I arrived in England I went to The Folly. Old Dan Cotswold was the sole occupant of the place, as he is now. He was delighted to see me again, after so many years. I heard a strange story from him. He said the house was haunted, that there had been mysterious rappings at the door, and that he had seen the ghost of my father and his horse in the stable where the tragedy of years ago took place."

"I recollect it well," said Colonel Ilford.

"Being no believer in ghosts, I thought someone must visit The Folly with an object. What was that object? I determined to find out, and I succeeded. One night I saddled my mare Madcap, and stood near her in the stall, waiting and watching. I did not wait in vain. I heard the muffled sound of hoofs, and presently a horseman appeared round the turn into the yard. My lantern was alight, and I put it out, but not before he saw me. He whipped his horse round and galloped down the drive at a mad pace. I sprang into the saddle and rode after him."

Ralph then gave a thrilling account of his ride and the leaping of the gate.

"I knew the horse he rode was a good one, and I was not mistaken. Do you know what horse it was, Colonel Ilford?"

"No; I have no idea."

"It was the horse I rode to victory to-day."

"Culloden!" exclaimed the astonished Colonel.  
"Impossible!"

"Yes ; it was Culloden, and Francis Kearney was the man I chased in that wild ride," said Ralph.

"But what was he doing at The Folly?" asked Colonel Ilford.

James Hyson smiled ; he thought he knew the reason of Kearney's visit.

"I must tell you more. When Dan Cotswold and I searched the house I thought of the secret cupboard in the dining-room. Pressing the button, I pushed the door back, and what do you think I found inside?"

Ralph had his eyes fixed on Francis Kearney, who seemed unable to speak.

"I will tell you," went on Ralph, not waiting for an answer ; "the dead body of my sister Rosalind."

Colonel Ilford and James Hyson started from their chairs, but quickly sat down again. Neither spoke ; they were too deeply interested, and Hyson turned as pale as death.

"A foul crime had been committed, and I determined to find out the murderer and punish him as I thought fit. I took the law into my own hands. With Dan Cotswold's assistance I made a coffin, placed my sister in it, and buried her reverently in The Folly grounds. Dan remonstrated with me, but all to no purpose. He said we should get into serious trouble over it, but I heeded him not. My mind was made up ; no one should deal with Rosalind's murderer but myself."

"You did wrong," said the Colonel ; "but I do not blame you. You Raymonds are different to other people. Have you found the man who killed your sister?"



"Yes ; he sits there," said Ralph, pointing to Francis Kearney. "My sister was his wife. He murdered her, and I wish to know the reason why, and how he did it, from his own lips. When he has made his confession, then I will tell him how I purpose dealing with him."

Colonel Ilford and James Hyson looked at Francis Kearney, who sat as though carved in stone. He made no sound ; he did not move, but his eyes were fixed upon Ralph in a ghastly stare.

"Speak, man ; what have you to say ?" said the Colonel.

Still Kearney made no answer, nor did he move.

"You will now tell us how you murdered my sister, and your wife, and how you did it," said Ralph.

Francis Kearney roused himself.

"I deny everything," he said, in a hollow voice.

"Mr. Hyson, will you please tell Colonel Ilford your story ?" said Ralph.

James Hyson complied with the request, and related to Colonel Ilford how he became acquainted with the Kearneys at Monte Carlo. When he repeated the conversation he overheard between them as to the plate and the diamonds, Francis Kearney realised that there was no escape for him. Hyson told of his discovery that Kearney had sold some of the diamonds in Paris, and added :

"Mr. Raymond will bear me out that the silver plate has also been disposed of."

This Ralph did, and explained all that took place at The Folly when he searched for it.

"Now," said Ralph, "we will hear your story."

"And if I tell you the truth," said Kearney, "what then?"

"I will fix your punishment. I am entitled to that, Colonel?"

"Leave him to the hangman; it is all he is fit for," replied Colonel Ilford indignantly.

"If he tells the truth, he shall escape that fate," said Ralph.

"He must not!" exclaimed James Hyson.

"You are my friends," said Ralph. "Promise me, on your word of honour, you will not repeat anything you have heard here, and that you will not interfere with my plan to punish this man."

They gave the desired pledge, and Ralph said:

"Another favour I request of you, and that is to give me your assistance in this matter, and whatever happens afterwards to maintain silence about it."

Again they promised, and Ralph was satisfied.

"Your story!" he said to Kearney.

"You swear you will not hand me over to the police?"

"Yes; I swear it," said Ralph.

"I married your sister soon after she left The Folly. I met her in London; she was moving in a fast set, and I do not think it was a bad match for her. We were fairly satisfied with each other, but there was no question of love between us."

Ralph thought of his sister's letter, so did Hyson, and both wondered to whom she referred when she wrote she had taken the plate to assist someone dearer to her than life itself.

"Two years after we were married she had a child, a daughter."

Ralph started. "Where is she now?" he asked quickly.

"She is all right. Far better off than ever she was in her life. She is at the Convent of the Good Shepherd in London. Her education has been attended to, and I can assure you no harm has befallen her."

"How old is she?" asked Ralph.

"Fourteen? She is the image of her mother. You will recognise her when you see her."

"Does she know her mother is dead?" asked Ralph.

"Yes. I had to tell her, or she would not have gone to the convent."

"Go on with your story," said Ralph.

"We were hard pushed for money, and she told me there was some silver plate hidden in the garden at The Folly, and that her brother and herself were the only two who knew where it was concealed, because you buried it together. I persuaded her to accompany me to The Folly and take it away. We went at night and dug out the chest, which I opened, and abstracted the plate. It was a difficult, dangerous task, but we accomplished it. I had previously surveyed the grounds and house, and knew there was not much to fear from the old man in charge. The money we raised on the plate was useful, and for a time I had luck on the turf. A few years later we met Hyson at Monte Carlo; all he has told you is correct.

"Then came a time when we were in sore straits,

and all our resources were exhausted. She had spoken about some diamonds she had stowed away soon after we were married. She said they had been her mother's, and she never meant to part with them. I thought of these when the proceeds from the sale of the plate was exhausted. Time after time I pressed her to let me have them in order to raise money. She refused. We had bitter quarrels over the matter. Of what use were the diamonds lying hidden away? I said. Why not sell some of them, and relieve our pressing wants, and satisfy our creditors?"

"Your creditors?" said Ralph.

"Not mine alone. My wife was very extravagant. She dressed in the height of fashion. She gambled, and spent money like water. I am not entirely to blame, I assure you. I used threats, but all to no purpose. I was determined to gain my ends, and use force if necessary."

Ralph Raymond's hands clenched as he said: "You scoundrel, you shall pay for this!"

"At last I persuaded her to do as I wished. I said I would not sell them all; it was not necessary. She would not have consented unless I had promised her that. She then told me they were hidden in a secret cupboard at The Folly, and it was necessary for us to go down again. We went by train, and waited until night, when we walked across the fields, and through the woods, until we reached the grounds.

"This time it was necessary to find a way into the house without alarming the old caretaker. It was more easily done than I anticipated. Cautiously we

crept along the terrace until we reached the dining-room window. She told me this was the room in which the secret cupboard was let into the wall.

"I tried the window and found it fast, but by an effort I managed to insert my knife, and succeeded in forcing the fastener. It sprang back with a clang, and we listened to hear if it had roused the old man. We heard nothing, and I opened the window, and we stepped inside. It was a large dismal room, and there was only a faint glimmer of light from the moon. I locked the door inside and then struck a match.

" 'Where is the place?' I said.

"She ran her hand over the wall until she found a knob, which she pressed, and the door slid back. Four jewel-cases were inside, and these she took out.

" 'Come along,' I said; 'be quick!' and I pushed the door back. Whether she intended taking the whole of the cases at the time, I do not know, but she followed me out of the window.

"I thought of the locked door and hurried back, changed the key from the inside to the outside, and went out again on to the terrace."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### KEARNEY CONTINUES

FRANCIS KEARNEY hesitated; he was coming to the most thrilling part of his story. So far, his confession had proved interesting, but his hearers were now eagerly anticipating what was to follow.

"You must tell us all," said Ralph; "there can be no shirking it now, the worst has to come."

Francis Kearney asked for a drink of brandy, which James Hyson handed to him.

"I shall never forget that night," he said, with a shudder. "When I joined her on the terrace, she was in a very excited state.

"‘I have the jewels here,’ she said. ‘I did not intend to take them all; I shall put three cases back again.’

"Knowing there was no time to lose, I urged her to go away with me from the place. I told her we could place the jewels we did not require in a bank, where they would be quite safe. She could have them in her own name, so that no one could obtain them without her signature. She would not consent.

"‘I shall put them back,’ she said, and made for the window.

"I took her by the arm and called her a fool. ‘We shall be discovered,’ I said. ‘Come away at once.’

"‘Let me go, or I will scream for help,’ she replied.

"I lost my temper, and snatched the cases out of her hand.

"She gave a cry of alarm, and I was afraid it would be heard. I placed my hand over her mouth to stifle her cries, and she struggled violently. She caught me by the throat, and I could not shake off her hold. It was then I grasped her by the neck. I hardly knew what I was doing. I had no intention of hurting her, much less of causing her death. We were both terribly excited, and in deadly earnest. There was a long struggle, and we swayed to and fro on the gravel path. Suddenly I felt her hands relax on my throat, and she sank down on to the terrace. I was exhausted, and half choked, and for some minutes dazed, and did not know what had happened.

"I called her by name, but there was no answer. Then I was afraid of what had happened. She lay quite still, and I dared not touch her. I spoke to her again, but there was no reply.

"I forced myself to kneel down beside her, and felt her heart and pulse. There was no beating, and I realised she was dead, and that I had killed her.

"The horror of that moment has never left me. I have been haunted by her day and night. She is always by my side. Oh, it is ghastly! I deserve my punishment, but it has been severe, more so by far than any you can inflict upon me. Ever since that night I have not known a moment's peace.

"When I realised she was dead, I thought of the consequences if my crime were discovered. What was I to do with her, how conceal the body, and hide

all traces of the deed ? There was no time to lose. Morning was breaking, and it would soon be light, and the caretaker would go his rounds.

"The secret cupboard ! Yes, that was the place. No one would find her there. I opened the window again, and carried her inside.

"It took me some time to find the spot, but I accomplished it at last. The perspiration poured off me, and I trembled in every limb. I could hardly lift the body. Time after time I tried, and at last succeeded, but to my horror I could not lay her straight down ; there was no room. I propped her up with her back against one end, and put her limbs out straight. As I did so, her eyes looked me in the face, and I started back horror-struck. It was an awful sight."

Francis Kearney shivered ; his face was ghastly, and he called for more brandy. They looked at him in silence, horrified at his tale, and fearful for its effect upon him.

"I had no time to hide her elsewhere, so I shut the door, and removed all traces of my presence.

"On the terrace I found the cases, and placed them in my pockets. I smoothed the gravel, which showed signs of our struggle, and then hurried away.

"Time passed, and my crime remained undiscovered. Then I saw the account of your arrival," he said, addressing Ralph. "This revived my fears. I knew you would go to The Folly, and that you were aware of the secret cupboard and the hiding-place of the silver plate. I must by some means remove the body before you discovered it.



"I rode Culloden the night you saw me. I had gone down for the purpose of taking her away, and burying her in the woods. You saw me, and that desperate ride took place. Fear possessed me as I heard your horse galloping behind me. The gate was shut. I had never attempted such a leap before, nor had Culloden, but I knew what a good horse he was. We cleared it a splendid jump, and I felt I was safe, but did not relax his speed. You lost traces of me. I knew several tracks through the woods, and the main one leading to St. Arvans.

"I was in a terrible state of suspense after this happened, and determined to try again at The Folly to obtain the body. I bided my time, until I knew you were in London, and went down again.

"I forced the window, opened the cupboard, and when I saw the body had disappeared I almost fainted.

"Ralph Raymond has found it, I thought. Where has he hidden it? What does he propose doing?

"I walked out into the grounds, my mind in a chaos, and quite accidentally I came across her grave. The earth had not settled down, and I saw a hole had been dug there.

"Stealthily going into the yard, I found a spade. Hurrying back, I dug with all my strength. It was a hard task, but I found what I required. There was a long box in the hole. I forced one end, and there saw the body, the face of my wife.

"Filling the hole again was an easy matter, and when it was finished I made the earth up on the top, placed the sods back, and it looked almost the same as when I found the spot.

"I realised, as I returned to town, that you were in possession of my secret, provided you found out she had been married to me. My life since then has been hardly worth living. I felt you were on my track, hounding me down, and that your silence only indicated a graver danger.

"Had I won the race on Satellite to-day, I had made up my mind to leave the country and go to some foreign land. I backed the horse to win a heavy stake, and his defeat has ruined me.

"Think what you will, I tell you solemnly I had no intention of killing Rosalind. It was a mishap, a fatality—call it what you will. You have heard my confession; now tell me what it is you require of me."

It was a terrible story, and Ralph Raymond was much affected by it, as were also Colonel Ilford and James Hyson. They regarded Francis Kearney with loathing and horror, doubting whether he had spoken the truth when he said he had not intended to commit murder.

Colonel Ilford and James Hyson looked at Ralph. What did he intend doing? How was their assistance to be utilised?

For some time Ralph remained silent; then he said:

"You will sell Culloden to Colonel Ilford?"

The question was so foreign to the matter in hand that they all looked at him in surprise.

"Yes," replied Kearney.

"You can have the thousand I offered you," said Colonel Ilford.

"Very well," replied Kearney.

"And the money must be placed in my hands to give to your child, my sister's child," said Ralph.

Francis Kearney acquiesced.

"We all return to London to-morrow," said Ralph.

"Together?" asked Kearney.

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"We will go down to The Folly—four of us."

Francis Kearney started, and asked in a hollow voice :

"For what purpose?"

"I mean to kill you, and bury you with the woman you so foully murdered," was the strange reply.

Francis Kearney turned as pale as death. "You would murder me?" he asked.

"No. You shall have a chance for your life; but if you do not kill me I shall kill you," said Ralph.

"I will not allow it," said Colonel Ilford. "You have no right to risk your life. Let the law take its course with him."

"You have promised," said Ralph, "and I know you will not break your word."

James Hyson looked at the shrinking, cowering figure of Francis Kearney, and thought: "Ralph Raymond will be in very little danger."

"Do you agree?" Ralph asked the wretched man.

"I must. If I kill you, what then?" he asked.

"You will not kill me," said Ralph quietly.

Again Kearney felt cold, and a numbness crept over his body. He felt Ralph spoke the truth, and that he would be certain to miss his aim. He knew

Ralph must be a well-practised hand with a pistol and revolver.

"I shall try and kill you," said Kearney.

Ralph smiled as he replied :

"I like to hear you say that. I shall have the satisfaction of knowing it was not a one-sided affair. You agree to my proposal ? "

"I have no option."

"You have."

"What is it ? " asked Kearney eagerly.

"The hangman's rope," replied Ralph, and Kearney shuddered.

Colonel Ilford did not like this arrangement. He thought Ralph exceedingly foolhardy to risk his life against Francis Kearney. He had, however, given his promise, and he would not go back on his word, no matter what the consequences might be.

"You must remain here for the night," said Ralph. "You can send for your things ; I do not mean to lose sight of you."

"As you wish," replied Kearney quietly.

"I will leave you in this room, with Colonel Ilford's permission, and lock the door," said Ralph.

Kearney made no answer, and they went out, leaving him there, Ralph undertaking to send for his clothes, or such as he required.

"There's suicide in that man's mind," said James Hyson to himself, but he did not express his opinion to his companions.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### “VENGEANCE IS MINE”

NO sooner had they left the room than Francis Kearney took the brandy decanter and poured out half a glass, which he drank neat, and it brought the tears into his eyes, almost choking him. He stretched himself on the sofa, and fell asleep.

About three o'clock in the morning he awoke with a start, and sat up, trembling with horror.

A fearful dream troubled him, in which he fancied he was buried alive with Rosalind, and struggled to get out of the coffin, but failed. As he awoke he put his hands to his throat and gasped for breath, fancying he was being stifled.

He poured out more brandy, and lay down again. The powerful spirit deadened his senses, and he fell into a heavy sleep, from which he took some rousing when Ralph entered the room.

Kearney sat up and looked round in a dazed condition. His brain was still muddled with the fumes of the brandy, but he staggered from the couch and eagerly drank more.

Ralph looked on with a hard smile, but did not interfere.

“If you drink much more brandy,” he said, “you will not have much chance of killing me to-morrow.”

“To-morrow!” said Kearney. “So soon?”

“Yes; the quicker it is over the better,” replied Ralph. “You had better have breakfast, and then it will be time to go to the station.”

“I cannot eat,” said Kearney. “Send me some more brandy.”

“No,” said Ralph, “you have had sufficient,” and he left the room, forgetting to lock the door.

Francis Kearney waited until he heard his footsteps die away, and then quietly opened the door; but he was not to escape. On the landing stood James Hyson, who said:

“Go back; we cannot part company yet, Francis Kearney.”

Kearney, completely cowed, went into the room again, James Hyson following.

“If you will not let me get it myself, obtain it for me,” said Kearney.

“What do you require?”

“Brandy.”

“You shall have some,” said James Hyson, who did not see the empty decanter on the table.

He rang the bell and gave the waiter the order.

Kearney drank a large dose, and seemed better.

“Your crime has found you out,” said Hyson. “I knew it would.”

“You did not know what had happened,” said Kearney.

“I guessed you had made away with your wife, but I did not know by what means. I am glad you are to pay the penalty,” said Hyson.

“Leave me alone,” said Kearney.

James Hyson left the room, and locked the door.

Later on they left for the station in an omnibus. The Nord platform was crowded, and it was evident there would be a full train. They secured a compartment, and had it to themselves when the train started.

There were many racing men as passengers, and they were rather surprised to see Francis Kearney in such company. James Hyson watched him closely, and could not make him out.

"He is meditating some means of escape," he thought. "There is very little chance of his being successful."

Half an hour after the start, Kearney went into the restaurant car and asked for brandy. He drank it, and called for another; then he went back to the carriage. He was restless, and his eyes burned brightly. They were in no mood for conversation, being occupied with their thoughts, and of what to-morrow would bring forth. The train rushed on, swinging round the curves, and then suddenly righting with a jolt.

Luncheon was announced, and they left the carriage. Colonel Ilford went first, then James Hyson, Francis Kearney, and Ralph. The first two crossed the iron gangway between the carriages, and entered the car.

Quite unexpectedly, Francis Kearney turned round quickly and faced Ralph. The suddenness of the movement took him unawares, and before he knew what had happened, Kearney clutched him by the throat and dragged him forward. He then pushed him back against the iron bar, which is used

for the safety of passengers, as they cross over the couplings from one car to the other. Ralph struggled desperately, but Kearney had the advantage, and bent his back over the bar until he thought his spine would snap. They were in great danger of falling on to the line.

James Hyson heard the noise, and looking round, saw the struggle taking place. He called to Colonel Ilford, who quickly followed him, and they rushed to Ralph's assistance. Several passengers appeared on the scene, but the space was too small for them to render help. The whole car was in an uproar, and ladies cried aloud, and one or two seemed on the verge of fainting.

Francis Kearney redoubled his efforts, but James Hyson flung himself upon him and pulled him off. Ralph, released of the pressure, almost fell over the bar backwards on to the line, but by a great effort recovered himself, and staggered forward.

Francis Kearney struggled desperately. He was maddened with drink, rage, and fear. He wrenched himself free and again flew at Ralph, who was too weak to withstand the concussion, and fell down, his head striking the bar, rendering him insensible.

Colonel Ilford seized him by the legs and dragged him out of danger.

When Ralph fell, Francis Kearney was dragged down with him, and shot forward with such impetus that he fell off the platform, under the bar, head first on to the line. The train stopped quickly, and the guard and attendants walked along the line to where Kearney lay motionless.



Ralph Raymond was carried by Colonel Ilford and James Hyson into their carriage in an insensible condition.

The guard stooped down, examined Kearney, and shook his head.

"He is dead," he said, "his neck is broken. He fell on his head on the rail."

They carried him to the train, and placed the body in the van.

When Ralph recovered consciousness, he was stiff and sore, and could only move with difficulty.

"Where is he?" was the first question he asked.

"I will make inquiries," said Colonel Ilford. "The train is moving again; they have picked him up."

He found the guard, who took him to see Francis Kearney. Colonel Ilford saw his neck was broken, and he was dead. A feeling of relief came over him as he looked at the body of the wretched man. He was glad it had ended in this way. Ralph Raymond was safe, and there would be no gruesome burial at The Folly. It was a happy intervention of Providence, the Colonel thought, and he remembered the words, "Vengeance is Mine." He went back to Ralph, who looked at him inquiringly.

"There will be no occasion to go to The Folly," said the Colonel. "We shall all have to go back to Paris, unless the matter can be settled at Calais."

"Is he dead?" asked Ralph.

"Yes; he fell on his head and broke his neck."

"Then he has escaped me after all," said Ralph.

"I am glad of it," replied Colonel Ilford, "for I see a way out of another difficulty."

“Indeed,” said Ralph, in a low voice; “what other difficulty?”

“Your sister is buried in unhallowed ground. We can now have her body removed and given proper burial in the churchyard. That, I am sure, will be a great relief to you.”

“How can it be done?” asked Ralph.

“We all heard Francis Kearney’s confession. He killed her, and to all intents and purposes buried her. True, he hid the body in the cupboard, but I think we shall be forgiven if we say he buried her where the body will be found. It will be exhumed, an inquest will be held; we shall give our evidence, and she will have proper burial. It may not be necessary to say he buried her there; the inference can be drawn,” said the Colonel.

“You are right,” replied Ralph. “It has happened all for the best. I quite agree with your plan; what do you say, Hyson?”

“I think Colonel Ilford has grasped the situation cleverly, and it will be a wise thing to follow his advice.”

A sensation was caused in the train by this tragic scene. Several passengers had seen the life-and-death struggle between Ralph and Francis Kearney. On arriving at Calais the affair was reported, and a telegram sent to headquarters at Paris.

A reply was quickly received, stating the inquiry would be held at Calais, and that all necessary witnesses must be detained to give evidence.

Two gentlemen who had seen the struggle volunteered to remain with Ralph and his friends until the inquiry was over.

Ralph was suffering intense pain in his back, and Colonel Ilford at once had him put to bed in the hotel at the terminus.

In a few days all was over. Francis Kearney was buried at Calais, and at the inquiry the story of the crime he committed was fully related, and also the confession he had made.

This produced a great sensation, both on the Continent and in London, and the country generally. The arrival of Ralph Raymond and his friends at Charing Cross was witnessed by a curious crowd.

A couple of detectives from Scotland Yard were present, and saw Ralph in reference to searching The Folly grounds for his sister's body.

This he agreed to, and when he was strong again they proceeded there direct, and gave Dan Cotswold a rare fright, until he was reassured by Ralph. Colonel Ilford and James Hyson were also present at the search.

Ralph, of course, knew where the spot was, but he agreed with the Colonel that it would be better to let them search for it, so that the conclusion would be drawn that Francis Kearney had hidden the chief evidence of his crime. Ralph skilfully led them by a roundabout way close to the spot, and the officers soon discovered the place where the grave had been dug.

Rosalind Kearney's body was removed into the house. An inquest was duly held, and the manner of her death described, as related by her husband.

Now that everything was satisfactory, and in proper order, her remains were given burial in the

picturesque churchyard of St. Arvans, much to the relief of Dan Cotswold, and also of Ralph himself.

Colonel Ilford and James Hyson also felt considerably relieved, for as the former said :

“The knowledge we possessed, Ralph, would not have been pleasant to carry about for years. There is another thing, too. If you want to sell The Folly you can do so ; you would hardly have been able to part with it while your poor, unfortunate sister lay buried there.”

“I should not,” replied Ralph, “and I do not intend to sell it. I must find her daughter, my niece. Perhaps we may live here some day, and I will try and make her life brighter and happier. She has no doubt read the terrible story, and I must do my utmost to soften the blow and make her forget the past.”

“My young friend, it is the best thing you can do,” said the Colonel heartily. “I honour you for coming to such a decision.”

## CHAPTER XXX

### ROSALIND

IN the schoolroom of the Convent of the Good Shepherd a young girl sat reading a book. She did not appear to be interested, and her attention wandered. She raised her eyes from the pages frequently, and glanced round, lost in thought.

She was a dark-complexioned, well-featured girl, with keen brown eyes, which occasionally softened and became lovable. Her hair was dark, and her figure slim. She gave promise of developing into a tall, handsome woman.

There was an air of sadness about her, and her feelings were depressed. Her name was Rosalind Kearney, and she was the daughter of Ralph Raymond's ill-fated sister. The news of her father's death, and the sad story of her mother's end, had been gently and kindly made known to her by Sister Mary Ursula, who was much attached to her. Such consolation as her sympathetic heart could afford had been given to the girl, who was grateful for this solace in her hour of trouble.

Rosalind had never been attached to her father ; she feared him, and resented his treatment of her mother. All her affection and love was lavished on her mother, and when she disappeared her grief knew

no bounds. She did not believe her father's story, and when she entered the convent school she still trusted to see her mother again. It was a sad shock when Sister Ursula unfolded the terrible story, toning down the details, and softening the blow as skilfully as she knew how.

The door opened and Sister Ursula entered quietly, beckoning Rosalind to come to her.

"There is someone to see you, child ; a friend, a very dear friend, I think he will be, for I like his looks."

"Who is it?" asked Rosalind. "I have no friends."

"It is your uncle, Mr. Ralph Raymond, and he is very anxious to see you," she replied.

The girl's face brightened as she asked eagerly : "What is he like?"

Sister Ursula described Ralph, and Rosalind listened eagerly.

"He must be very like my mother," she said. "I will go to him."

Sister Ursula took her by the hand, and led her to the room where Ralph sat waiting impatiently. He was eager to see his sister's child, to help her, to give her a home, to love and cherish her, for the sake of the dead. She was the only tie he had to remind him of happier days, when The Folly was the scene of many a joyous romp.

The door opened, and Sister Ursula led her in.

"This is your niece, Mr. Raymond," she said, with a sweet smile. "I will leave you together ; no doubt you will have much to say to her," and she discreetly withdrew.

Ralph came towards her, took her hands in his, looked earnestly into her face, and then stooped and kissed her. Rosalind's eyes quivered, she could not master her emotion, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

This was more than Ralph could bear. He took her in his arms and soothed her.

"Rosalind," he said in a low voice, vibrating with intense feeling, "I will take your mother's place. You are all I have in the world. I will try and make your life happy, and together we will forget all that has happened. You will trust me, and confide in me, will you not?"

His voice soothed her, and she looked up into his face, smiling through her tears, and replied :

"Yes ; I can trust you, for you are like my dear mother."

"That is right," said Ralph brightly. "Are you happy here?" he asked.

"Oh, yes ; they are all very kind to me, Sister Ursula especially."

"Then perhaps you had better remain until your education is finished, but I must take you away with me for a holiday, and try and bring the roses into your cheeks. I think I will take you to the Bankshire Downs for a few weeks. My housekeeper, Mrs. Mersey, is a kind old soul, and I am sure you will get on well together."

"I shall be very pleased to go with you," she said.

Ralph arranged for Rosalind to have a month's holiday, and the following week he took her to the Downs.

The girl was delighted with the change. Everything was new to her, and the bracing air revived her spirits, and, as Ralph expected, brought the colour into her cheeks.

The horses interested her, and Ralph bought a quiet cob, and taught her to ride, and she accompanied him on to the Downs in the early morning.

"What beautiful creatures race-horses are!" she said, and, much to Ralph's delight, she picked out Fearless and Culloden as being the pair she liked best.

Mrs. Mersey was delighted with the girl, and did all in her power to amuse her, and render her visit enjoyable. The month passed all too quickly, and she returned to the convent.

Ralph Raymond had a new interest in life now; his thoughts were constantly on his niece, and he determined The Folly should be made habitable by the time she left school. To this end he wrote and told Dan Cotswold men were coming to put the place in order, and that he must take a rest, as there was no occasion for him to render assistance.

The Folly in a short time resounded to the work of busy builders and decorators. There was much to do, and the expense would be great, but Ralph did not shirk it. His winnings over Culloden, and the stake he received from Colonel Ilford, helped him considerably, and he had money of his own.

Both Colonel Ilford and James Hyson offered to render him assistance if he required money, and they were exceedingly kind and considerate.

When Ralph went down to see how matters were



progressing, he was surprised at the alteration that had been made in such a short time. The Folly was transformed, and commenced to look more like the old home of his boyhood's days. The gardens were in the hands of a skilful man, who had engaged a competent staff to help him.

At the end of two years The Folly looked bright and cheerful. The wilderness vanished, and the garden flourished exceedingly; a great change had been accomplished.

Rosalind left the convent, and came to Heath Lodge, and after a few weeks there Ralph took her to see The Folly. The girl was delighted with the old home of the Raymonds. She roamed about the house, in which Mrs. Mersey had been installed in command, and looked wonderingly at the old pictures and various curious things it contained. She wandered about the gardens and the woods, and examined every nook and cranny with interest.

"I should like to see the spot where they found my mother," she said to Ralph, and he took her to the place.

She looked at the ground, where no traces remained, sadly, and a bitter feeling rose up in her heart against her father. She tried to stifle it, but could not crush it, and turning to Ralph, she said:

"Is it wicked to be glad my father is dead?"

He was startled by the question, but understood it and her feelings, and replied:

"No, I think not—I am sure not. It is only natural under the circumstances."

"I have you, Uncle Ralph, and I am sure my

mother would not wish me to have another guardian," she said.

"I am glad you think so, Rosalind," he replied. "Your life will be a happy one, I trust, although it was clouded in your youth. Everything I can do to brighten your days shall be done."

"You are very kind to me," she replied.

"The kindness is on your side, for sacrificing the pleasures of society to live with an old bachelor," he said.

She smiled as she answered :

"You are not old, Uncle Ralph. There is plenty of time for me to have an aunt."

He laughed, and shook his head.

"I think there is no fear of that. You will one day be mistress of The Folly."

"Not for many, very many years, I trust," she said earnestly. "To be with you is to be contented. You are all I want, and you are so good and kind to me."

"We shall see," replied Ralph, smiling, and he thought as he looked at her :

"You will not lack admirers ; I hope your fate will be happier than your mother's. I must see to that."

After Kearney's death and Ralph's determination to live principally at The Folly, he appointed Henry Loughton his trainer, and he removed to Heath Lodge.

Here Culloden and Satellite were stabled together, for the whole of Francis Kearney's belongings, after his just debts had been paid, were handed over to his daughter. Rosalind, therefore, was the owner of

Satellite, and very proud she was of her first thoroughbred.

Colonel Ilford arranged with Ralph to have his small string trained by Loughton, and in due time the winners turned out from Heath Lodge were so numerous as to attract much attention.

Colonel Ilford was a great favourite with Rosalind, and he petted and made much of her.

"Let me tell you, my young friend," he said to Ralph, "that if I was five-and-thirty years younger you would not have Miss Rosalind long on your hands. Gad! she is a fine girl—a very fine girl. We must take care of her, my boy—take care of her."

James Hyson she also liked, but could not quite fathom him. Many people failed to understand him; he was a puzzle even to himself.

One evening, when Colonel Ilford and James Hyson were at The Folly, Ralph Raymond related the story of his race after her father down the long avenue to Rosalind. The girl listened intently, never taking her eyes from his face, and as he spoke of the leap over the gate the colour left her cheeks, and she grew excited.

"And it was Culloden he rode?" she said.

"Yes, Culloden; and right well he carried him."

"He carried you even better at Auteuil," said the Colonel.

"I think the clearing of that five-barred gate will never be beaten by him," said Ralph. "It was a magnificent leap—the best I ever saw."

Rosalind, as she sat on a fallen tree one morning and looked down the avenue, saw the new gate at

the entrance, and thought of the scene on that eventful night when her Uncle Ralph rode such a stern chase after her father. Ralph, seeing her seated there, walked down and joined her.

“ I have been thinking over the story you told us the other night,” she said.

“ Then it interested you ? ” he asked.

“ I shall not forget it.” Then she added : “ I think, uncle, we ought to call the avenue ‘ Raymond’s Ride.’ ”

THE END



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By **CAPTAIN GUY BURROWS,**

Late District Commissioner for the Aruwimi District of the Congo;  
Chevalier de l'Ordre du Lion; and author of "The Land of the  
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continually come to England during the last few years, but which have not  
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[See next page.]

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## *Press Opinions on*

# **The Curse of Central Africa.**

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“It would be affectation to deny that the appearance of the present volume has not been awaited with considerable interest and curiosity by the increasing numbers of people in this country who have become painfully sensitive on the subject of our national responsibility for the existence, and consequently for the actions of the Congo Free State. For some years past, charges more or less definite have been made against the officials of the local administration in Africa, involving not merely an utter disregard of the rights of property of the natives, but the most callous and inhuman contempt for life. The higher officials, both on the Congo and in Brussels, have been charged with complicity in the crimes of their subordinates, partly by reason of their neglect to detect and punish the atrocities committed by their agents, and partly because these crimes are, it is alleged, the direct and necessary result of the policy adopted and sanctioned by the State for the exploitation of the natural products of the country. To these charges the official answer has been a general denial of their accuracy, with a plea that it is impossible altogether to avoid misconduct on the part of agents serving under peculiarly trying conditions, remote from the central authority, and therefore difficult to control; but that wherever specific acts of misconduct have been brought home to any particular officer, steps have at once been taken to bring him to trial, and that when he has been found guilty he has been punished with the utmost severity. It has further been the custom of the Free State and its apologists to weaken the effect of the charges brought against it by suggesting that when made by former officials they are advanced for interested motives. The volume published to-day is the joint work of a former officer in the British Army who was, for two periods of three years each, in the service of the Free State, and of an American citizen who was also at one time in the service of the State, and subsequently revisited the Congo as an agent of one of the commercial companies in which the State authorities hold half the share capital. We gather, however, from a long introduction signed by Mr. J. G. Leigh, that the writer of the introduction has had a considerable share in the production of the volume, which, unfortunately, bears signs of its composite authorship. On a cursory examination, at least, we have not found it always easy to distinguish whether it is Captain Burrows or Mr. Canisius who is the narrator, due, probably, to defective

arrangement of the material. It is also much to be regretted that the photographs should have been so very badly reproduced that they are in several instances quite useless for the purpose which they are avowedly intended to serve. But these matters, though by no means unimportant in what is intended as a formal indictment of the methods employed by the Congo State Administration, are defects of form rather than of substance, and it is in the material parts of the indictment that the real interest of the volume will be found. It has been suggested that the statements made in the book may probably form the subject of investigation before a court of law. We do not know how far this suggestion is likely to be realised, but in any case, we do not propose to anticipate the result of such an inquiry, should it be held, by discussing in detail the evidence which is adduced by the authors in this volume. Without committing ourselves to the opinion that an English court of law, with its very rigid rules of evidence, is the best tribunal for conducting an inquiry which must necessarily, if it is to be at all exhaustive, cover a very wide field, we may point out that we have always strongly urged the imperative necessity that an inquiry should be held into the appalling charges made against the Congo Administration. That view has been further strengthened by an examination of the volume now under review. Some of the charges here made, with a particularity of names and dates which enables their accuracy to be put to the test, are of so atrocious and appalling a character that the mind instinctively revolts at the idea that a civilised country can have produced monsters capable of the deeds alleged to have been committed. It is simply impossible that these charges can remain without investigation. The Sovereign of the Congo Free State cannot ignore them; nor can the Governments responsible for the creation of the Congo Free State decline to recognise their responsibility in this matter. Moreover, it is not sufficient to attempt to discredit the authors because they both appear to have been willing to re-enter the service of the State for a further term. In the introduction Mr. Leigh quotes some correspondence which passed between Captain Burrows and the Congo Administration, and between Mr. Canisius and the Administration. We frankly confess that we do not like the idea that, with the knowledge they had of its methods, Captain Burrows and Mr. Canisius should have been willing to re-engage themselves in the service of the Free State; but, as we have said, that circumstance in no way detracts from the necessity for a full, public, and impartial inquiry into the charges now publicly made against the Congo Administration, for if those charges are well-founded, they

constitute not merely an outrage on the conscience of the civilised world, but a menace to the future work of every European Power which has taken on itself the responsibility for the good government of any portion of Equatorial Africa." —*Morning Post*.

"Messrs. R. A. Everett & Co. publish 'The Curse of Central Africa,' by Capt. Guy Burrows, with which is incorporated 'A Campaign amongst Cannibals,' by Edgar Canisius, the volume being marked 'Second Impression,' for reasons which are not completely explained in the introduction from the pen of Mr. John George Leigh. It is stated in the introduction that legal proceedings have been threatened on behalf of the Congo State by Sir Hugh Gilzean Reid, whose name is twice misspelt. We may say at once that the introduction and also the portion of the book which is from the pen of Mr. Canisius, an American, contain detailed statements with regard to a well-known Belgian officer, Major Lothaire, which might be made the basis of legal proceedings in our courts. Many of the Belgian officers who are named in the volume are beyond all doubt men whose shameful and shocking proceedings could not possibly be defended before an English jury. But the case of Major Lothaire is different. He is not without friends and admirers, even in this country, and although he became unpopular here after he shot Stokes, yet Stokes was not above reproach, and there is a Belgian side to that transaction. If it is to be established that the statements in the volume before us are in any degree exaggerations, it is by Major Lothaire, we think, that such proof can possibly be offered. The true case against the Congo State is made by Mr. Fox-Bourne in an admirable book which we recently reviewed, and it is doubtful how far it is strengthened by the more detailed and much more sensational statements put forward in the present volume upon evidence which may or may not be sufficient. The book is an odd one in its construction. Capt. Guy Burrows begins, as it were, in the middle of his story, for he merely states in his first paragraph that 'at the expiration of a year's leave I left Antwerp on the 6th of June, 1898, to resume my duties as Commissioner.' His contribution to the volume is followed by that of Mr. Canisius, but it is not clear at what point this second section ends, nor who is the author of the last part—which is political, and follows Mr. Fox-Bourne, Mr. E. D. Morel, and the Belgian writers who have published accounts of the Congolese administration. The book may be lightened for the general public, and especially for those of them who are fond of horrors, by the photographs, some of which have

already appeared elsewhere, though all are not of a nature to create confidence. The first photographs, after the portraits of Capt. Burrows and the Sovereign of the Congo State, are two which face each other, but one is merely an enlargement of the other, apparently inserted for some purpose of verification which is not clear. This photograph bears signs of having been touched, and therefore strikes a note which is unfortunate. It is also an unhappy fact that the authors will set against them a good deal of opinion which ought to have been on their side, on account of the statement, in the Burrows part of the book, that many of the missionaries are men who have resorted to the Congo State 'with a desire to escape unpleasant consequences resulting from some form of indiscretion or other.' Many of the missionaries in the Congo State are men of the highest repute in their religious bodies. To some of them we owe the most complete and the most trustworthy exposure of the horrors of Congolese administration which has been made. It is the case that much has been said against the missionaries for having given countenance to the proceedings of the King of the Belgians. Those who, like Mr. Thomas Bayley, M.P., in a recent speech to a Baptist gathering at Nottingham, have felt it their plain duty to censure the conduct of missionaries of their own denomination, will find their hands weakened by the unjust and unfair charge here made by Capt. Burrows. What can be truly said is bad enough. In reply to Mr. Bayley, a gentleman was sent down, apparently from the headquarters of the Baptist missions in London, to state that the Baptists could not but be grateful to the King of the Belgians, who had reduced by fifty per cent. the taxation upon their missionary property, and that the recent deputation to Brussels to express confidence in the humanity of the King was justified by this reduction. A more terrible admission we have never known. The contribution of Mr. Canisius to the volume is thoroughly deserving of attention, and, as he is evidently a serious observer, we note the inaccuracy of his statement that 'the African, as a general rule, is not suitable material for the making of a good soldier.' This is supported by a reference to 'the scandalous conduct of some of the negro regiments of the United States.' The last allusion is to circumstances unknown to us. We had always heard and believed that the Government of the United States had had reason to congratulate itself upon its black troops, both in the Civil War and in the recent war with Spain. Undoubtedly, however, African regiments, recruited with care, have produced admirable results, and the French Senegalese levies are among the best troops in the world, as are the Egyptian Soudanese. The index is feeble, and we note the

misprint of *Wanters* for the well-known Belgian name of *Wauters*.—*Athenæum*.

"Following Mr. Fox-Bourne's 'Civilisation in Congoland,' which we noticed on its appearance, this volume should serve, if anything will, to make English readers realise the appalling state of things that prevails in Central Africa. Captain Burrows was formerly in the service of the Congo State, as was Mr. Edgar Canisius, whose experiences among the cannibals are incorporated with the Captain's narrative. In addition to the verbal record, the imagination of the reader is assisted by reproductions of photographs of barbarities that have taken place. The result is a compilation of descriptive and pictorial horrors that no healthy-minded person would turn to except from a sense of duty. But for all who can do anything to influence public opinion that duty exists, for the driving home of the facts must precede any hope of effective action. With the main heads of the indictment against the Congo Free State those who take any interest in the question are already familiar. Its agents are paid by commission on the rubber and ivory produced from their several districts, and no inconvenient questions are asked or effective restrictions laid down as to the treatment by which the natives are made to serve the most lucrative purpose. Agents guilty of misdemeanours in the Congo are, as Captain Burrows puts it, 'liable to be prosecuted only by a Government which indirectly employs them, and is likely to benefit by their offences'—the result of which ingenious provision for 'justice' can be easily imagined. As a matter of fact the natives are exploited with an unscrupulous barbarity happily without known parallel. The callousness with which white people regard their black fellow-creatures belongs more or less to every nation, but Captain Burrows has come to the conclusion that 'not the worst can be accused of such systematic, comprehensive and cold-blooded misdeeds as those which during the past fifteen years have made of the Congo State a veritable charnel-house.'

"Of the Belgian officers who have so active and responsible a share in these cruelties, Captain Burrows speaks in quite unflattering terms, apart from their treatment of the blacks. 'Arrogant,' 'ill-bred,' 'cowardly' are some of the epithets which he applies to the type; and they are represented as taking delight in the infliction of pain and humiliation on any one in their power, including their own countrymen. If this be so, it makes it necessary to take with qualification Captain Burrows's frequent suggestion that it is the system rather than the men that must be held responsible for the Congo atrocities;

whereas his picture of the men would seem to show that, whatever the system under which they worked, they would turn it to barbarous use. This tendency to make the system share the blame appears even in what is said of the notorious Major Lothaire :—'The system of butchery which has been inaugurated in the Mongalla concession is directly traceable to him, although he has always been sufficiently wily not to place any written proof of this where it could be brought against him. . . His hasty and despotic treatment of the blacks, as shown in the massacre at Bau, had due effect upon his subordinates, by whom he has been regarded as a hero since the day he lynched a British subject, Stokes, a white man. . . It is, however, mere justice to add that Major Lothaire is a brave, usually even-tempered, and, I firmly believe, not naturally hard-hearted man. For many of his faults and much of the ill that he has done, the system of the Congo must be held primarily responsible.'

"One of the first and most natural questions to be asked is, How far does the influence of missionaries avail to lessen those awful evils? And the answer, at least as given by Captain Burrows, is disappointing. We need not quote at length his personal opinion of the missionaries he has met in the Congo. Of some he evidently thought highly ; others he writes down as weak-chinned and the wrong men for the work ; others, again, he does not hesitate to describe as 'rank.' But, taking the men as they are, what have they done for the protection of the natives? According to what we are here told, practically nothing. Incidentally, they may do something to ameliorate the condition of those around them, but on such vital matters as the collection of rubber and ivory and forced recruiting, they are powerless. 'They are fairly in the toils of a most immoral corporation, and they are obliged to frame their actions according to its dictates. They have no option in this matter. If they became in the least degree troublesome ; if they denounced a single one of the crying evils that surround their daily lives ; if they taught the native the iniquity of the conditions under which he is made to live and groan, they would soon cease to be missionaries in the Congo State.'

"It is possible that this picture of missionary impotence is overdrawn, but it is best that Captain Burrows's view of the case should be widely known amongst the friends of missions. Many would be ready to say that acquiescence in nameless cruelties is too great a price for religious teachers under any circumstances to pay ; but one effect of the publication of this book will probably be authorised statements from the missionaries' point of view, such as that by the Baptist Missionary



Society, which we give elsewhere. As to whether anything can be done to improve matters, Captain Burrows indicates his own opinion with sufficient clearness. Belgium ought to be deprived of the government, and the Congo partitioned amongst the three principal Powers possessing adjoining territory, viz., England, France, and Germany. This, of course, is easier to put on paper than to perform in practice; but the Powers which sanctioned the creation of the Congo State at the Berlin Conference of 1885 cannot shake off their responsibility for what has happened. Failing action on their part, civilisation, to say nothing of Christianity, will continue to see Central Africa made a shamble in order that the Belgians may 'gather' rubber at a fabulous profit. As a parting gleam of light, and as showing that something can be done by a humane official, we may mention that, when commissioner at Basoko, Captain Burrows succeeded in suppressing the flogging of women. He declares that he has evidence to prove that before his arrival half-a-dozen women were flogged every day."—*Christian World*.

"As the first edition is marked 'Second Impression,' it may be presumed that this much-talked-of volume has been toned down since the publisher was threatened with libel actions, and that some of the passages included for the 'first impression' have been prudently cancelled. The volume, as we have it, at any rate, makes fewer attacks on individuals than we were led to expect. It does not for that reason lose any of its value as an impeachment of the methods of Congo State administration. In some other respects, however, it is disappointing. Though Capt. Burrows's name appears as its principal author, about half the volume consists of 'A Campaign amongst Cannibals,' contributed by Mr. Edgar Canisius, and with both writers' compositions Mr. J. G. Leigh, the editor, admits that he has taken great liberties. He has 'ventured to modify' Capt. Burrows's work 'as originally planned and completed,' and he leads us to suppose that he has practically written, or re-written, all Mr. Canisius's chapters, besides supplying the lengthy introduction which he signs. Even if in this way the literary quality of the book is improved, its authority is weakened as a record of first-hand information. It is unfortunate, moreover, that both writers should have to admit that, after several years' service under the Congo Government, and experience of the abominations in which, as servants of the State, they had to take part, they were willing to renew their occupations, and have only made their disclosures now that their offers have been rejected. Whatever defects may be found in the book, however, it affords very valuable confirmation of charges that have re-

peatedly, and within the past few months with special emphasis, been brought against King Leopold and his agents. Capt. Burrows spent six years in various parts of the Congo, principally in the regions near Stanley Falls, where, according to Mr. Leigh, 'he fulfilled the very repugnant duties imposed upon him by his official positions to the entire satisfaction of the authorities,' and it must be set down to his credit that he appears to have done whatever little he could in lessening the evils that he could not prevent. The Balubas, 'a docile and interesting people,' with whom he came in contact while he was in charge of the Riba-Riba or Lokandu station, far beyond Stanley Falls, seem to have been especially befriended by him. 'About this time,' he tells us, 'large numbers of Baluba slaves commenced to arrive at my post, frequently 300 in a batch. These people had been captured by the commandant, and carried off to work as slaves in the stations and on the plantations of the State. Many died of hunger and exposure, and quite a number, too sick to proceed, remained at the post. Those whom I succeeded in curing continued at Lokandu during the rest of my stay, and were employed on the plantations and other work. By treating them kindly I gained their confidence, and on moonlight nights they would sing for me their native songs and dance the Baluba dances.'

"His labours as a State slave-driver must certainly have been irksome. He says: 'Nearly all the disputes among the natives and the followers of the Arabs are caused by mutual slave-stealing. Much of the time of the post commanders is devoted to these disputes, for no sooner does a slave run away than his master sets off at top-speed from the station to inform the white man. "Master, my slave has been stolen!" he cries. "Send quick your soldiers to bring him back!" Half an hour is required for the interrogation of the excited slave-owner, generally with the result that he admits that the slave had run away, but that So-and-So is harbouring the fugitive in his village. To the latter, therefore, a soldier is sent, with instructions to bring to the post both the slave and his protector. A court is then held, and if the claimant is proved to be the runaway's owner, the man is forthwith handed over. By an unwritten law, and under pretext of respecting *mœurs indigènes*, the slave system is rigorously upheld by the officials of Bula Matari.' Against two of his Belgian associates Capt. Burrows brings charges that are especially grave, and in the case of one they are supported by translation from the *procès verbal* of the inquiry which he conducted early in 1901. The allegations are that, in one instance, the culprit handed over a native who was obnoxious to him to other

natives, telling them to eat him ; that, in another instance, he caused one of his 'boys' to be 'beaten with blows of a bludgeon by the work-people till death ensued' ; that, in other instances, he caused the chief of a village and a dozen prisoners taken from another village to be killed, and gave the corpses to a rival chief as luxuries for one of his feasts. In other cases, again, this official handed over to two neighbouring chiefs several prisoners from various villages 'as payment.' 'He gave me,' according to the testimony of one chief, 'six men and two women in payment for rubber which I brought into the station, telling me I could eat them, or kill them, or use them as slaves—as I liked.' This Belgian, however, had gone to Europe before the investigation took place, and we hear nothing of any punishment being accorded either to him or to any of the other offenders of whom Capt. Burrows had to complain.

"Mr. Canisius's 'Campaign amongst Cannibals' is a painful story in seven chapters, dealing as it does with some of his experiences under Major Lothaire during the Budja revolt of some two years ago. The cruelties and atrocities here recorded are, of course, none the less terrible because Mr. Canisius took them all in his day's work. But somehow it is difficult to attach all the importance that perhaps it deserves to the testimony of so callous an authority. 'The cruel flogging of so many men and boys would probably have had a peculiar effect upon a new-comer, but I was in a measure case-hardened,' we read on one page ; and on another, 'To be quite candid, I was, on the whole, by no means disinclined to accompany the column, for I much desired to witness the operations which were to be conducted with a view of compelling the Budjas to accept the benefit of our rubber regime.' A great many more Congo atrocities than the body of the book reports are catalogued by Mr. Leigh in seven pages of his introduction, but this summary is too bald and unauthenticated to be of much weight. Mr. Leigh is probably responsible for the chapters in which some account is given of the history and general arrangements of the Congo State, but in which nothing new is told, and there are numerous grave inaccuracies. On one page we are told that the Congo State has an area of 1,000,000 square miles, and a population of 40,000,000 ; and in another that the whole Congo Basin, of which the Congo State occupies only about two-thirds, 'comprises some 800,000 square miles and a population variously estimated at from 8,000,000 to 27,000,000.' Of the Abir Company, again, we read in one place that 'it is only fair to say that, so far as the present writer is aware, no allegations of ill-treatment of

the natives have ever emanated from the districts where the Société Abir conducts its operations,' and in another that 'the now notorious Abir has had a record scarcely less scandalous than that of the Mongalla Company,' better known as the Société Anversoise. It is extraordinary that such self-contradictions could escape the authors, to say nothing of the publishers' readers. They enormously detract from the importance of the book. It undoubtedly contains some materials of value. But these are greatly impaired by the failure clearly to understand that in a work of this character, in which credibility is everything, strict accuracy in regard to detail is the first, second, and third essential."—*Morning Leader*.

"'I pray,' said Prince Bismarck, in 1885, speaking of the new Congo Free State, 'I pray for its prosperous development and for the fulfilment of the noble aspirations of its illustrious founder.' It was with a burst of missionary enthusiasm that the Powers represented at the Berlin Conference in 1885 handed over a million square miles to the care of Leopold, King of the Belgians. The ostensible object of the new Belgian administration was to carry the light of civilisation into the dark places of Central Africa, and to suppress the slave trade; it undertook to 'assure to all nations the advantages of free navigation,' and to further 'the moral and material well-being of the native populations.' Europe has been too busy with its own affairs to put the question: 'How has this trust been carried out?' But the question is answered with alarming clearness in a book which appears to-day, chiefly from the pen of Captain Guy Burrows, with a chapter by Mr. Edgar Canisius. 'The Curse of Central Africa' is a vehement, uncompromising indictment of the whole system of administration by which the Congo Free State is governed. It confirms, with a definite array of facts, names, and dates, the rumours which have continually come to England during the last few years, but which have not unnaturally been regarded as extravagant and incredible.

"Captain Guy Burrows has served for six years in important positions under the Congo Free State. His book, which Mr. R. A. Everett is now publishing, is a plain, vigorous piece of writing, purporting to set down his own experiences in the Congo, and what he actually saw of the methods of government, the treatment of natives, and the 'opening-up' of the country. At a dinner given recently to Captain Burrows, his statements were confirmed by Mr. Edgar Canisius and Sous-Intendant Hoffmann, who have both lived for many years in the Free State, and by Mr. John G. Leigh, who has also had

some acquaintance with the country. When we recall the stories that have so often reached England before, and the scandals that have from time to time made a stir even in Belgium, this additional and more definite information leaves no room for doubt. The Free State Government, directly responsible to King Leopold alone, must be regarded as a stupendous trading company, owning what is virtually a monopoly, and armed with the power of life and death over its employees. The government is carried on by means of a military force—*La Force Publique*—an army recruited by compulsion, and serving a long term of years. This army is mainly fed by supplies which the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood are compelled to bring in. The staple products of the country are india-rubber and ivory; and it is the duty of the Government officials to extort from the natives the largest supplies that can be obtained. A native chief is informed that he must send in a certain quantity of rubber within a given time (there may or may not be a nominal payment); if the rubber does not arrive a punitive expedition is undertaken, and a village may be burnt, the men killed, and the women taken away to do the work of slaves. 'In the days of Tippoo Tib and the Arab dominion,' says Captain Burrows, 'thousands of natives were killed or carried off into slavery; but I venture to say that no Arab chief ever managed the business on so vast a scale as some of the officials of the Free State.' The employment of forced labour, slavery in all but name, and that under the most degrading circumstances, is part of the system of the country. Captain Burrows's book reproduces photographs showing native chiefs in the act of being tortured, and Belgian officers looking on approvingly. A certain proportion of the rubber and ivory exacted from the natives is part of a District Commissioner's income. 'Considering that the very duties of the men involve the perpetration of acts of cruelty, and that they are daily familiarised with deeds which are unspeakable and indescribable, it will be agreed that it is not the man but the system which is deserving of censure.' The State is one 'whose very conditions of service include the incitation to commit what must be morally called a crime.' Notorious offences against life and property are winked at by officials, and disregarded at headquarters. The whole State, the Executive at Boma, the Government in Brussels, cannot be acquitted of participation in a system which is rapidly organising corruption and degrading the natives, and has long since stultified the magnificent promises of King Leopold and Bismarck.

"This is the account which Captain Burrows gives from his

own personal experience of the Congo. And we must congratulate him on coming forward to say what others—including, we fear, the Baptist Missionary Society—have shrunk from saying. Captain Burrows is entirely free from the accusation of sensation-mongering. His book is a cold, clear exposition of hard facts. It reveals a terrible state of affairs; and it does so without any appeal to emotion. We see a system of government which would have been a scandal in the worst days of Republican Rome. We see the Government of a neighbouring civilised Power, to which the Congo was given in trust by the combined action of the Powers, directly responsible for that scandal. If nothing else can be done immediately, the facts should be made known; the Belgians must be made to understand what is going on in the name of their Sovereign; Englishmen must be enlightened, because they, with the other Powers, agreed to hand over the Congo to King Leopold. As it is, everything has been done to conceal the facts. The Belgian Press has been gagged, and, through the medium of English Courts, attempts have been made to secure an injunction against the publication of Captain Burrows's book. It is surely curious that, whilst we are at liberty to criticise the direct representatives of the King in England, a foreign Government, to hide its own shame, should be able to threaten the freedom of the English Press. Yet we must not only insist—it is an important point—on the right to ventilate such questions as this, but also point out that, as long as the present Government remains in power, it is the only way of securing reform in the Congo. After all, it is the Belgians who are, in the first place, responsible for enormities which are being committed by Belgian citizens. We do not believe the moral sense of Belgium is at such a low ebb that, if it were fully aware of the horrors of the Congo, it would really tolerate their continuance. But meantime the responsibility of England remains; she was a member of the Conference of Berlin; her trading interests in West Africa are at stake; and the condition of free rights of trade to all countries has not been kept. The atrocities committed in the name of civilisation are even worse than those in Macedonia; whilst the responsibility of England is greater. And though the victims in one case are barbarians, and in the other case are Christians and Europeans, the facts make no difference to a question, not of faith, but of humanity. But to influence public opinion in Belgium should not be the only remedy. Our own Government should formulate questions on the subject. Captain Burrows suggests another Conference of Berlin, which should divide up the Congo country between Germany, France, and England. We scarcely think this is

practical politics. We have not much reason to expect great results from a Concert of Europe, and though it was easy for the Berlin Conference to vote away the Congo country, it would prove much harder to get it back again. But the reign of slavery and horror revealed by Captain Burrows cannot be accepted as a permanent shame to European civilisation. It is perhaps idle to hope for action from the present Ministry—a Ministry whose interest in labour, black or white, is sufficiently indicated by their attitude in regard to the Bethesda scandal—but Captain Burrows's record cannot fail to effect reform through some channel."—*Daily News*.

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**Leading Contents.**—*Eels and Eel Bobbing—Decoys, and How to Use Them—Wild Fowling at Sea—Punt Gunning—Curres and Short-winged Fowl—Wildfowling Costume—Shore Shooting—Flighting—Hickling District—Horsey District—The Waveney Valley—The Yare Valley—Yachts and Yachting from 1880 to 1900, etc.*

### PRESS OPINIONS.

"In acquaintance with the details of all the forms of sport presented by the district of the Broads the author of 'Shots from a Lawyer's Gun' can hardly be rivalled, and, with the knowledge he possesses, a succinct guide to the locality might easily have been produced. As it is, he has given us a number of articles which have appeared from time to time in various periodicals, and although the volume in which these have been collected is well worth reading, especially by visitors to Norfolk and Suffolk, we think that it might have been materially improved by a little more pains. For those who enjoy angling for 'coarse' fish the information given will undoubtedly prove useful, especially the appendix on the origin and application of the fishery laws, the by-laws for the control of pleasure and other boats, tables of tides, distances, etc. An interesting chapter is devoted to the management of 'decoys,' by which is meant the exhibition of either living or imitation ducks to attract wild birds within reach of the sportsman's ambush; also on approaching birds by the aid of a canvas body representing a horse or an ass, the illustrations of this being very amusing. In fact, all the productions of Mr. Everitt's pencil show considerable power, and some of the vignettes are beautiful. On the whole, the book is pleasantly written, and the account of yachting on the Broads, with illustrations of the competitors in the regattas, is admirable. The index also leaves nothing to be desired."—*Athenæum*.



"We know of no work, old or new, which fulfils its own purpose so thoroughly. It is a book which appeals primarily to the sportsman, but no one who loves the Broads merely from an artistic point of view can fail to find interest on every page. A volume crammed with accurate information and delightful anecdote."—*Times*.

"Mr. Everitt's book contains a great deal of information on the sport to be got among the waterways and lagoons of the Eastern Counties, which are generally spoken of as the Norfolk Broads. In this very attractive part of East Anglia about two hundred miles of waterway and four thousand acres of lagoons or inland waters are open to the yachtsman. Wherries, with comfortable, and racing yachts, with uncomfortable, accommodation may be hired at Norwich, Wroxham, and other places, at the most reasonable charges. The shooting and the fishing on the Broads are for the most part open to everyone. If the wildfowling is not what it was, great catches of perch, bream, and, in the winter, pike may still be made. Portions of Mr. Everitt's book have already appeared in the *Field* and similar newspapers, and now that they are put together, want of order and some repetition rather spoil the book as a whole. In some five-and-twenty chapters he discourses on pike and eel fishing; yachts and yacht racing from 1800 to 1900; shore shooting and punt gunning; the use of decoys and duck shooting. Other chapters deal with various districts of the Broads, or describe particular expeditions. There is a great deal in the book that is useful and interesting to anyone who is planning an excursion, and on the coarse fishing and wildfowling the author writes with knowledge gained by experience. But the reader must not expect a book of any literary merit. The style is inclined to alternate between the high-flown and the facetious of the local guide-book. If scientific names are used, they should be used correctly, and we may point out that the bearded tit is not now called by naturalists *Calamophilus biarmicus*, nor is the Latin name of the dabchick *Mergus minor*. Some persons may also think that there are too many references to frequent and liberal potations from the beer-jar and the whisky bottle."—*The Spectator*.

"'Broadland Sport' is a very readable and interesting book, but not more so than a score of others which we have had the pleasure of receiving during the last twelve months. Good shooting of all kinds is still to be had in Broadland; and wherever the game is preserved and the shooting is to be hired, no one on the lookout for some good mixed ground could do

better than make inquiries on the East Coast between Yarmouth and Southwold. The Broads themselves and the reed beds will supply any number of wild fowl, besides first-rate pike and perch-fishing; the woods and the osier beds will hold plenty of pheasants, hares, and woodcock, while on the adjoining stubbles, turnips, and heather, some of the best partridge shooting in England, of the old-fashioned kind, is to be had. The marshes should yield abundance of snipe, and the gorse-covered sandbanks ought to be peopled with rabbits. Such a sporting Paradise may still be picked up in Broadland, if you like to pay the price. But as game and wild fowl are not nearly so plentiful as they used to be, while the demand for them is much greater, a really good shoot in this highly-favoured region has now become an expensive luxury. There is still, however, a considerable extent of fairly good open shooting to be got, though many places once famous for it have now sadly deteriorated. The fate of Oulton Broad may stand for several more:—'In days gone by there were several inhabitants in the quaint little waterway village who gained their sole means of livelihood from fish and fowl. That was before the railway came and before steam drainage mills were heard of, and a Cockney would have been considered daft had he then thought fit to appear in the regions of Broadland in the costume and general rig-out which is now no longer strange to the quiet dwellers in this out-of-the-way corner of Old England. Drainage was the first great blow to sport, steam and railways the next, then the breech-loader, and finally the invading host of would-be sportsmen, all eager to kill something. Year by year the water-birds have diminished in number, and by degrees they desert the more frequented rivers, streams, and broads until on many of the more public waterways there is hardly an edible wild water-bird per hundred acres. Oulton has suffered most in this respect. We do not suppose there is a public shooting water in Norfolk or Suffolk which has been so harassed. Often are seen pictures in the London illustrated papers entitled, "Wildfowling on Oulton Broad," wherein the artist depicts a shooter sitting on the bottom of a punt, in the reeds, with his waterman holding an anxious-looking retriever by the collar. Overhead are flying streams of mallard and wild-duck, and the envious looker-on anticipates that at least a score will grace the bag before the shooter returns to breakfast. What a myth! What a snare and delusion! Years gone by such a picture would not have been an exaggeration, but now things are sadly altered, and if the shooter killed one couple of mallard during the month of August on Oulton Broad, he would be considered fortunate.' Horning Ferry, on the river Bure, must be one of the most

charming spots in Broadland, whether we are in love with the perch or the picturesque. The shooting is very strictly preserved, though duck may be got from a boat. An idea seems at one time to have prevailed that anyone being on the river might shoot anything crossing it, a delusion which is still cherished in many parts of England. The river Bure, from Horning to Wroxham Broad, runs through the heart of a highly-preserved game district, and keepers are always in hiding among the reeds or alders on the bank. Woe to the unlucky wight who knocks over a pheasant within sight of one of these sentinels! The raparian owner claims the soil of the river, and the 'poacher' will meet with no mercy from the Bench of Magistrates; nor is there any reason why he should. Pheasants are reared at a great expense, and are practically as much private property as chickens. The chapters on yachting and on otter hunting will be full of interest for the lovers of such amusements. But as they are not peculiar to Broadland, we need not include them in our notice."—*The Standard*.

"We have already reviewed Mr. Nicholas Everitt's work on 'Broadland Sport,' but the two chapters on yachting 'During the Past' and 'During the Present' form such a special feature that we are glad to notice them apart. These chapters, occupying about 70 pages, really contain a history of yachting in the Broadland district during the last hundred years. As Mr. Everitt says, yachting 'is a sport in which all can indulge, from the millionaire in his luxurious steam yacht to the gutter-snipe in a wash-tub; there is plenty of room for everybody without being obliged to rub shoulders with everybody.' Room there must be for many a long day, seeing that in Broadland proper there are 200 miles of waterway, comprising over 4,000 acres of open water. Our author points out that the old 'water frolics' were to be remembered more as jollifications than by reason of the sailing capabilities of the boats. The patriarch of all Broadland boats was the *Augusta*, built about 1755, and she is said to have retained all her old material up to 1867, while as late as 1885 she made the home of an artist near Buckenham Ferry, who was wintering in the old craft. Our summary of Mr. Everitt's history must needs be brief. From 1800 to 1850 there was little development in Broadland pleasure craft, but from 1850 to 1870 marked improvements took place in speed, appearance, and comfort. But the *Maria*, built of heart of oak in 1834, had a notable record as a successful racer. Bought by Sir Jacob Preston in 1837, it is rumoured that at his death in 1894 he left by will a provision sufficient to preserve this veteran in good order and up-keep for all time.

"The lateeners were long the fastest racing craft of Broadland, one of the most successful being the *Waterwitch*. 'Ter *Worterwitch*,' said an old shipwright, 'wor lornched the daay Pointer fought the Black on Mussel 'Eath,' whereby the date was fixed as 1818. There is a slight error here. The fight, 12th May, 1818, was between Cox, blacksmith, and Camplin, a weaver, and Ned Pointer seconded Camplin. Cutters became more fashionable in the fifties, but from 1840 to 1869 the ideal model of a racing boat is described as 'a cod's head bow with a mackerel tail.' Mr. Everitt gives a vast amount of detail concerning many notable craft, for in his index the names of no less than 171 yachts are given, from the *Ada* to the *Zingara*, but we miss any allusion to Mr. Suckling's *Marmion*, built upon his estate at Woodton in 1828, and considered a very beautiful yacht in her time. Perhaps, however, she was not kept upon the local waterways. The Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club, founded in April, 1859, obtained Royal patronage and the prefix Royal 16th February, 1867. With the establishment of this club, yacht racing, not feasting, became the main object of the various regattas, and the term, 'water frolic,' rapidly died into disuse. The first ocean yacht race of the club came off 29th June, 1867, from Harwich to Lowestoft; but, we are told that for several reasons the East Anglian coast is not a good one for yachting. The Yare Sailing Club, formed in 1876, has had a very prosperous career, and pleasure wherries came into vogue about 1880. In the chapter on 'Yachts and Yachting during the Present—1880 to 1900,' Mr. Everitt brings his subject virtually up to date, and here we learn that the 'Great Yarmouth Yacht Club' was founded in 1883, the 'Broads Dinghy Club' in 1895, and the 'Waveney Sailing Club' in the same year. In this last the chief prize-winner is the *Unit*, designed and built by Mr. W. S. Parker, of Oulton, long a dredger in Lowestoft Harbour, working twelve hours a day, yet making time, on week-days alone, to construct this craft, which is still 'Cock of the Walk' at Oulton Broad. These yachting chapters are embellished with very numerous illustrations, and a list of the more important annual fixtures will be found very useful. 'The motor craze,' regretfully remarks the author, 'has now found its way even to these peaceful and secluded haunts, and launches of all shape, size, build, and method of propulsion are to be daily met with.' We are inclined to suggest that this yachting section might well be issued in a separate form. Meantime we note that the first edition of Mr. Everitt's book is exhausted, and a portion of the second impression has already been sold."—*Eastern Day Press*.

"In the preface to 'Broadland Sport,' Mr. Nicholas Everitt

modestly disclaims the title of artist-author: the value of his book, though it certainly smacks more of actuality than of art, is increased rather than diminished by the occasional amateurishness of its author, for this very amateurishness stamps it far more as a true record than any polishing or elaborate phrasemaking could have done. Something of the guide-book, something of the sportsman's diary, something of the would-be sportsman's handbook, it forms a complete, lucid, and welcome exponent of the sports and pastimes practised on or around the lagoons, waterways, and marshes of East Anglia, and at the same time is replete with hints that will serve the sportsman in all lands. The two chapters devoted to yachting are quite a feature of the production, tracing as they do its origin and gradual development, and giving details of every boat of importance launched during the last hundred years, the history of every yacht club, the supporters of yacht-racing, and much matter concerning the owners of racing-yachts. Mr. Everitt is evidently as keen about the sport of Broadland as Mrs. Battle was upon her particular pastime, but his enthusiasm is kept well within bounds, and he is never too assertive. He might with safety, had he been so minded, have parodied Van Troil's famous six-word chapter on Snakes in Iceland—'There are no snakes in Iceland'—with a page headed 'Concerning Broadland Sports Undealt with in this Book'—'There are no Broadland sports undealt with in this book.'

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